

**A Borzoi Book on Latin America**



# **THE LIBERATOR, SIMON BOLIVAR:**

**Man and Image**

**Edited with an Introduction by**

**David Bushnell**

**Alfred · A · Knopf: New York**





*Borzoi Books on Latin America*

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# The Liberator, Simón Bolívar



MAN *and* IMAGE



EDITED WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

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## Dedication

*To the memory of the Liberator Simón Bolívar; and to the host of Bolivarians and anti-Bolivarians, dead and living, who by their dedicated attention to his thoughts and deeds have made this anthology possible.*

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# Contents

INTRODUCTION	xii
MAP: THE CAMPAIGNS OF BOLÍVAR	xxi
CHRONOLOGICAL OUTLINE: BOLÍVAR AND THE LIBERATION OF SPANISH SOUTH AMERICA	xxiii

## I. LIFE AND WORKS I

1	Simón Bolívar	
	<i>The Cartagena Manifesto</i>	3
2	Simón Bolívar	
	<i>The Jamaica Letter</i>	11
3	Simón Bolívar	
	<i>The Angostura Address</i>	22
4	Simón Bolívar	
	<i>Address on the Bolivian Constitution</i>	37
5	Simón Bolívar	
	<i>The Bolivian Constitution</i>	47
6	Some Lesser Bolivarian Texts	62
	<i>The Decree of War to the Death</i>	62
	<i>A Decree for the Emancipation of Slaves</i>	65
	<i>The Military Bonus Law of 1817</i>	67
	<i>The Bolivarian Version of the Guayaquil Interview—José Gabriel Pérez</i>	71

(viii) CONTENTS

<i>Critique of Olmedo's "La Victoria de Junín"</i>	75
<i>Views on the Congress of Panama</i>	79
<i>Circular of 1828 on Educational Reform</i>	81
<i>The Final Cry of Despair</i>	85

II. MAN AND WARRIOR 87

7 Daniel F. O'Leary	
<i>Portrait of Bolívar</i>	89
8 Hiram Paulding	
<i>Bolívar in His Camp</i>	93
9 Alfred Hasbrouck	
<i>The Boyacá Campaign</i>	99

III. CULT AND ANTICULT 107

10 Germán Carrera Damas	
<i>The Cult to the Liberator (I)</i>	109
11 Fermín Toro	
<i>Description of the Funeral Honors</i>	114
12 Felipe Larrazábal	
<i>And the Lord Sent Bolívar</i>	122
13 Alfonso Zawadzky C.	
<i>Our Father, Liberator</i>	127
14 Cristóbal L. Mendoza	
<i>The Cult to the Liberator (II)</i>	129

15	H. L. V. Ducoudray-Holstein <i>Bolívar, Miss Pepa, and a Battle at Sea</i>	136
16	José de San Martín (?) <i>The "Lafond Letter"</i>	144
17	Francisco de Paula Santander <i>Bolívar as the Victim of His Own Success</i>	148
18	Salvador de Madariaga <i>Bolívar and Miranda, Bolívar and Napoleon</i>	157

#### IV. SOME MODERN INTERPRETATIONS 171

19	Laureano Vallenilla Lanz <i>Idealogues, Disintegration, and the "Bolivian Law"</i>	173
20	José Luis Salcedo-Bastardo <i>Economic Revolution: Agrarian Reform</i>	181
21	M. S. Al'perovich, V. I. Ermolaev, I. R. Lavretskii, and S. I. Semyonov <i>The Bolívar of Marx Corrected</i>	187
22	Arthur P. Whitaker <i>Bolívar and the American System</i>	196
23	Víctor Andrés Belaúnde <i>A Standard Appraisal</i>	203

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY	212
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*Simón Bolívar*

## Introduction

It might seem presumptuous to add still another volume to the mountain of printed matter already existing on the subject of the Liberator, Simón Bolívar. No historical figure of Latin America has received so much attention from professional and amateur historians, poets and essayists, school-children, and patriotic speechmakers. None except Fidel Castro and the late Che Guevara is so well known beyond the confines of Latin America. Indeed, Bolívar justly occupies a significant place not only in Latin American annals as a founder of independent nations, but in the broader history of Western civilization, as one of the most gifted leaders of the cluster of revolutionary movements that marked the last quarter of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth. Although the revolutionary impulse in Latin America failed to produce as workable a political system as it did in the United States, or as extensive social and economic consequences as it did in Europe, these are not sufficient reasons to deny Bolívar a niche alongside George Washington and Robespierre. The difference in results was due to special local circumstances that placed Latin America on the edge of Western civilization's mainstream; and not least among Simón Bolívar's gifts was the clarity of insight with which he analyzed those very circumstances. For that matter, the concrete results of the Latin American revolutions for independence were by no means negligible even in the socioeconomic sphere.

Nevertheless, on the whole Bolívar has been poorly served by his biographers. As Germán Carrera Damas has pointed out, the copious accumulation of detailed information on every aspect of Bolívar's thought and action has served to obscure as much as to clarify his place in history (Docu-

ment 10). This situation may well be due in part, as Carrera Damas asserts, to the fact that all too often Bolívar's life has been the object of a "cult" rather than a subject for rigorous historical analysis. Undoubtedly it is also due to the intrinsic complexity of the subject, for Bolívar played an active part in every stage of the independence movement as well as its aftermath and in a geographic theater that extended from the Caribbean Sea to Bolivia. Of no other leader of Latin American independence can a comparable statement be made, and it naturally follows that both his aims and opinions and his objective role underwent repeated changes. For all these reasons, the lack of anything approaching a "definitive" biography is not wholly surprising. And it is significant, perhaps, that the best biography to date was written by a German rather than a fellow Latin American.<sup>1</sup>

This volume obviously has a more limited set of objectives. It is designed to serve as a ready reference, an aid to teaching, and a stimulus to further study, by bringing together between two covers the essential facts of Bolívar's career, a group of selections from his major writings, and a sampling of the vast literature that has been written about him from his own time to the present. Needless to say, the excerpts that have been included in the latter category have not been chosen on the basis of their presumed validity of interpretation. They are intended merely to give some idea of the range of interpretations offered, although a very incomplete idea, because almost every age and school of thought has created a Bolívar to suit its own purposes. Thus there are not only the good Bolívars and bad Bolívars, but Masonic Bolívars and Roman Catholic Bolívars, pro-American and anti-American Bolívars, right-wing authoritarian Bolívars (good or bad, depending on the viewpoint of the writer), and the Bolívar defined in the title of one recent biography as "father of the liberal left."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Gerhard Masur, *Simón Bolívar* (Albuquerque, 1948).

<sup>2</sup> Milton Puentes, *Bolívar, padre de las izquierdas liberales* (Bogotá, 1965).

Despite the somewhat bizarre variety of opinions that have been expressed concerning him, there are things on which everyone, or almost everyone, can agree. To begin with, Bolívar was very definitely a product of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment in intellectual formation and political outlook. The revisionist school that seeks to play down the Enlightenment as a source of inspiration for Latin American independence in order to place the ideological roots of the movement in Hispanic juridical and philosophical traditions, exemplified by the Jesuit Francisco Suárez (1548-1617), has not yet seriously laid claim to Bolívar; the picture of Bolívar swinging in his hammock and reading Voltaire or Rousseau is too firmly established.<sup>3</sup> At the same time (although in this respect there may be some difference of opinion), it is fairly clear that Bolívar was instinctively closer to that current of the Enlightenment which was represented by Enlightened Despotism than to the more democratic and radical currents which found expression in the French Revolution. Unlike the Enlightened Despots, he was a convinced republican who sincerely accepted the representative principle; but on most issues other than independence itself he was essentially a gradualist, and he wished to see the representative principle operate within narrowly defined limits. Bolívar was always seeking a formula that would reconcile a decent amount of civil liberty, a touch of popular representation, and all the outward trappings of republicanism with the existence of a vigorous and largely self-perpetuating form of political authority. He appears to have been groping for something comparable to that more recent achievement of Latin American political inventiveness, the firm one-party democracy that contem-

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<sup>3</sup> It does not necessarily follow that the thought of the Enlightenment was the primary "cause" of Latin American independence, only that in a case such as Bolívar's the doctrinal justification and formal aims of the movement were couched essentially in Enlightenment terms. On the problem of causation, see the volume in this series by R. A. Humphreys and John Lynch, *The Origins of the Latin American Revolutions, 1808-1826* (New York, 1965).

porary Mexico enjoys under the aegis of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional. Unfortunately, the solutions that Bolívar proposed at one time or another—such as the hereditary senate, “moral power,” and a life-term president with the right to choose his successor—were not half as workable as the modern Mexican solution. As a political thinker, therefore, Bolívar was eminently successful in diagnosing what Spanish America needed, but he was less successful in devising specific institutions to meet those needs.

It goes without saying that Bolívar was also a man of considerable military talent. After all, he won; and it was not by mere accident that he happened to be in command at the time of final victory, since he had fought through all stages of the independence struggle and in the process had either outlasted or outperformed countless other patriot generals. Venezuelan writers usually go so far as to rank Bolívar among the great captains of world history, and Vicente Lecuna in particular supported this contention with an impressive amount of detailed research.<sup>4</sup> Yet the objectivity of such scholars as Lecuna cannot be taken for granted, and students of comparative military history have unfortunately paid little attention to the wars of Latin American independence. Hence, the wisest course is to accept Bolívar as a gifted commander without attempting to specify just how gifted he may have been in terms of professional military accomplishments. In fact, the struggle waged in Latin America did not lend itself very well to the application of textbook strategy and tactics. It was fought with armies that were generally small in size, haphazardly equipped, and composed to a large extent of untrained and unwilling recruits; and it was fought over a terrain such as neither Caesar nor Napoleon had to cope with. Under such circumstances, military science per se counted for less than purely human qualities of perseverance and leadership. Bolívar possessed these to an admirable degree. He had the determination and resilience that were needed to recoup his

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<sup>4</sup> See especially Vicente Lecuna, *Crónica razonada de las guerras de Bolívar* (3 vols., New York, 1950).



fortunes after every setback; and he had the magnetic force of personality, that some social scientists insist on calling charisma, that was needed to mold his improvised units into an effective fighting force. These same factors naturally helped account for his successes in political as well as military leadership, although in politics, unlike war, he never attained a definitive victory.

The purely military aspects of Bolívar's career have received less attention in this volume than they intrinsically deserve. Such neglect is regrettable, but anyone who wishes to pursue the subject of the Liberator's campaigns can easily locate both primary and secondary sources. The international aspects may also appear to be neglected, to judge from the small number of selections expressly devoted to them. However, the topic is touched on repeatedly in other connections, for with Bolívar, foreign relations could never be separated long from the conduct of the war and of domestic politics. Although his efforts to promote close cooperation among the Spanish American peoples took many different forms—ranging from mutual military assistance to the abortive proposal for a Federation of the Andes to comprise all of Gran Colombia, Peru, and Bolivia—they were a central feature of his activity at all stages of his career except at the very last, as Arthur P. Whitaker points out (Document 22). Equally (if not more) persistent was Bolívar's interest in cultivating the good will of Great Britain, the one foreign power whose attitude he perceived to be of critical strategic importance for Spanish America, and one that he also looked upon as a model to be copied, within reason, by the Spanish Americans. By contrast, he did not propose the United States as a model; its institutions were too perfect, certainly too perfect for his own countrymen and possibly for the North Americans themselves.

Although the main lines of Bolívar's foreign policy have been generally agreed upon by later scholars, specific details often give rise to controversy. For example, the question of his attitude toward San Martín, and in particular his willingness to share with him the glory of finally defeating the Spaniards in Peru, is still under debate. Although this problem certainly does not deserve the time and effort that

historians have spent on it, it can scarcely be excluded from the present anthology (Documents 6D and 16). Another question is whether Bolívar can in any sense be claimed as a founder of Pan Americanism. This has usually been debated in terms of his attitude toward the United States, which was a curious amalgam of diffidence and admiration. Because Bolívar did not originally intend that the United States be invited to the Panama Congress of 1826, an assembly that was his own inspiration, he cannot be considered an advocate of Pan Americanism in the current sense. Indeed he did not even want all the Latin American nations represented. Yet it is not too much to say that he did help set precedents for later Pan Americanism to build on, and not merely in his sponsorship of the Panama Congress. If this makes him a precursor of the Organization of American States, well and good; if not, there is still no great harm done in invoking his name at inter-American gatherings.

Only in fairly recent times have the Liberator's social and economic attitudes and policies received much attention from historians. He himself was probably less concerned with social and economic problems than some of his modern admirers suggest, for not only did he have other things to worry about, but he lived in an age when social welfare and economic development did not yet rank among the primary responsibilities of government. Most of the strictly economic measures that he adopted were directed toward safeguarding or increasing government revenues for the sake of the war effort. Military and quasi-military considerations also influenced his approach to such problems as slavery, whose abolition was begun under his auspices, and the status of the *pardo*, or free colored population, to which he offered the ending of caste disabilities. In both cases he was aware of the need to win mass support for the patriot cause and to ward off unrest that might endanger public order. Nevertheless, in these matters the demands of expediency coincided with a perfectly sincere humanitarian impulse on Bolívar's part; and regardless of the motivation (or the effectiveness) of the social and economic policies he pursued, the problems he dealt with were of obvious im-

portance. Thus, there is increasing preoccupation with this side of the Liberator's activity, which is especially reflected in at least two of the selections (Documents 20 and 21, as well as 6B and 6C). In his own writings, moreover, Bolívar left some remarkably keen analyses of the racial, class, and cultural tensions that afflicted Spanish America during his epoch. His awareness of these tensions was, of course, a principal reason for his insistence on the political expedient of a strong central executive; he believed that no other system could even begin to keep the disparate elements of Spanish American society under control.

Finally, Bolívar's social commentaries also help illustrate the wide range of his thinking and interests. In fact, the Liberator's public addresses and official and private correspondence touch on virtually all the issues and problems of the day, from "pardocracy," as he designated the threat of *pardo* domination,<sup>5</sup> to "fanaticism," which was the multipurpose cliché standing for both popular religious intolerance and undue clerical influence in society and government. He was prepared to comment on the affairs of Europe as well as Latin America, and not merely in connection with the mutual relations of the old world with the new. He could hold forth on Greek and Roman history, and on the canons of literary criticism. Bolívar had the further merit of expressing his ideas in writing with clarity, wit, and vigor, so that for more than 150 years he has remained by far the most readable of the major figures of Latin American independence. Therefore it is fitting that the greatest number of selections in this volume come from his own pen. It is not possible to include more than a small fraction of his total output, but this is not irreparable, because all his works are easily available in Spanish, and there is also a convenient two-volume set of his writings available in English.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The contradiction between talk of "pardocracy" and support of legal equality for all races is only apparent. On this matter, also see below, page 80, note 1, and page 166, note 5.

<sup>6</sup> *Selected Writings of Bolívar*, compiled by Vicente Lecuna, edited by Harold A. Bierck, Jr., translated by Lewis Bertrand, 2 vols. (New York, 1951).

(xx)     *Introduction*

Thus, the reader who may be inspired to sample still more of the Liberator's writings will not have far to look, and the more who do so, the better this volume will have served its purpose.

Enough has been said by way of introduction, and it is only necessary to add that all new translations of material presented here have been made by the editor. Most of the writings of Bolívar himself, however, have been taken from a previous translation as indicated in respective source notes.



## Chronological Outline: Bolívar and the Liberation of Spanish South America

- 1783 July 24. Birth of Simón Bolívar, in Caracas.
- 1786 January 19. Death of his father, Juan Vicente Bolívar y Ponte, a wealthy creole planter and militia colonel.
- 1792 July 6. Death of his mother, María de la Concepción Palacios y Blanco.
- 1798 July 4. Bolívar commissioned *subteniente* in the *Batallón de Milicias de Blancos de los Valles de Aragua*.
- 1799-1802 Bolívar's first visit to Europe. Stayed principally in Spain, making an excursion to France early in 1802.
- 1802 May 26. In Madrid, married María Teresa Rodríguez del Toro y Alayza, daughter of a noble family of Caracas. Shortly afterward, returned to Venezuela.
- 1803 January 22. Death of Bolívar's wife.
- 1803 December-1806, October. Bolívar's second stay in Europe. Traveled more widely, met Alexander von Humboldt and other notables, observed the course of the Napoleonic Empire, and renewed acquaintance with his boyhood teacher and ardent disciple of Rousseau, Simón Rodríguez.
- 1805 August 15. Made a vow at the Monte Sacro

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Prepared by the editor. Adapted, in part, from the "Cronología de Bolívar" appearing in *Sociedad Bolivariana de Venezuela, Escritos del Libertador* (Caracas, 1964-), I, 451-499.

- in Rome to work for liberation of his homeland.
- 1807 January 1. Landed at Charleston, South Carolina, on his way home from Europe. He visited the major cities of the United States before continuing to Venezuela.
- 1807 June–1810, April. Lived in Venezuela, devoted to agricultural and commercial activities. Took part, as a relatively minor figure, in the revolutionary ferment that arose in Spanish America following the Napoleonic invasion of Spain and overthrow of the legitimate monarch Ferdinand VII in 1808.
- 1810 April 19. Caracas revolutionists deposed the Spanish captain-general of Venezuela and established a governing junta. Bolívar strongly supported the move, even though the junta ostensibly was to act in the name of Ferdinand VII, then a captive of the French.
- 1810 June 6. In company with Luis López Méndez and Andrés Bello, Bolívar left for London on a diplomatic mission for the junta.
- 1810 July. The Caracas envoys approached the British government, seeking its sympathy and support for the new regime. Contact also established in London with the exiled Venezuelan revolutionist, Francisco de Miranda.
- 1810 September 21–December 5. Left England and returned to Venezuela.
- 1810 December 11. Miranda's return to Venezuela, to work for the cause of independence from Spain. Bolívar was in agreement with him on the issue, but personal tension developed between the two.
- 1811 July 5. Elected Venezuelan Congress formally declared independence; birth of the "First Republic."
- 1811 July–August. Bolívar took part in suppression of a counterrevolutionary movement at Valencia.

(xxiv) *Chronological Outline*

- 1811 December 21. Congress adopted a formal constitution for Venezuela, which created a republican governmental structure and introduced such reforms as legal equality for non-white racial elements. But both Miranda and Bolívar felt that it dangerously weakened the new nation by granting wide powers to the separate provinces (in accord with the federalist principle).
- 1812 March. The Spanish commander Domingo de Monteverde launched a drive to overthrow the republican regime, starting from the royalist stronghold of Coro in western Venezuela.
- 1812 March 26. Major earthquake struck Venezuela, especially patriot-held portions, resulting in widespread disorder and demoralization.
- 1812 April 23. Miranda was given dictatorial powers to save the republic.
- 1812 May 4. Bolívar took command of the key fortress of Puerto Cabello.
- 1812 July 6. Forced to abandon Puerto Cabello.
- 1812 July 24. Capitulation of Miranda to Monteverde.
- 1812 July 31. Embittered at Miranda's surrender, Bolívar took part in a move to arrest him at La Guaira while he was preparing to leave Venezuela (Document 18).
- 1812 August 27. Left Venezuela en route to Curaçao and ultimately the neighboring colony of New Granada.
- 1812 December 15. Bolívar's "Cartagena Manifesto," analyzing reasons for failure of the First Republic and inviting New Granada to assist in a new effort to liberate Venezuela (Document 1).
- 1813 May 7. The President of the United Provinces of New Granada, a loose confederation that included a majority though not all of the provinces of the neighboring colony, authorized Bolívar to lead an invasion of Venezuela.



- 1813 May–August. *Campaña Admirable*, in which Bolívar fought his way by rapid strokes from the New Granada border to Caracas (entered in triumph on August 6).
- 1813 June 15. Decree of War to the Death, issued at Trujillo (Document 6A).
- 1813 August–1814, September. The “Second Republic” of Venezuela. Bolívar ruled as military dictator, hoping to avoid the weaknesses of the First Republic. However, the Second Republic had weaknesses of its own, in particular its inability to win and hold the allegiance of the lower classes, who distrusted the intentions of Bolívar and other creole aristocrats who provided leadership on the patriot side. This situation was shrewdly exploited by royalist chieftains such as the sanguinary José Tomás Boves.
- 1814 June 15. Bolívar suffered a complete rout at the hands of Boves in the battle of La Puerta.
- 1814 July 7. Venezuelan patriots abandoned Caracas.
- 1814 August–September. Last-ditch fighting against the royalists and internecine quarreling among the patriots. Bolívar finally set sail from Carúpano (September 8), bound once more for New Granada. (By the end of the year, organized resistance in Venezuela was largely ended, although scattered groups of patriots continued to hold out.)
- 1814 November 27. Bolívar promoted to general of division and commissioned to lead forces of the United Provinces of New Granada against the state of Cundinamarca (area of Bogotá), with which it had been engaged in endemic civil warfare.
- 1814 December 12. Capitulation of Cundinamarca to the forces of Bolívar.
- 1815 May 9. Bolívar embarked for Jamaica, as internal dissension continued in New Granada.

- (The latter soon succumbed, like Venezuela, to royalist reconquest.)
- 1815 September 6. Bolívar's "Jamaica Letter": an analysis of the Spanish American scene, statement of principles, and call for renewed efforts (Document 2).
- 1815 December 25. Arrived in Haiti, where he obtained support from President Alexandre Pétion.
- 1816 May–August. Unsuccessful efforts by Bolívar to reestablish a foothold in Venezuela.
- 1816 June 2. Issued a decree against slavery, at Carúpano (Document 6B).
- 1816 September 4. Again arrived in Haiti to seek aid.
- 1816 December 28. Returned to South America for the last time, establishing contact with insurgent bands still active in northeastern Venezuela.
- 1817 January–March. Intermittent fighting with the royalists in northeastern Venezuela. Also more dissension among patriot leaders, notably between Bolívar and General Santiago Mariño, "Liberator of the East."
- 1817 April–May. Transferred operations to the lower Orinoco.
- 1817 July 17. Angostura surrendered to the patriots. It became de facto capital of independent Venezuela.
- 1817 October 10. Distribution of confiscated enemy property and other national assets to patriot soldiers decreed by Bolívar (Document 6C; see also Document 20).
- 1818 January. Movement of Bolívar farther up the Orinoco to the province of Apure, where his leadership was recognized by José Antonio Páez. The latter had already assembled a strong following among the *llaneros* ("plainsmen") of the Orinoco basin.
- 1818 February–1819, April. Fighting in Venezuela

between the patriots of Bolívar and Páez, who for the most part controlled the Orinoco plains, and the Spanish regulars under General Pablo Morillo who dominated Andean Venezuela. During this period Bolívar received a steady trickle of European volunteers, who made slight difference numerically but in many cases brought valuable special skills and training.

- 1819 February 15. Bolívar's "Angostura Address" (Document 3). It was delivered at installation of the Congress of Angostura, whose purpose was to place the patriot regime on a more formal legal basis.
- 1819 May. Bolívar began a campaign for liberation of New Granada (Document 9).
- 1819 August 7. Defeated royalist army in Battle of Boyacá.
- 1819 August 10. Triumphant entry of Bolívar into Bogotá.
- 1819 September 11. General Francisco de Paula Santander, himself a native of New Granada, placed in charge of the newly liberated portions of his home territory.
- 1819 December 17. In response to Bolívar's proposal that it decree the permanent union of Venezuela and New Granada, the Congress of Angostura formally created the Republic of [Gran] Colombia. The Presidency of Quito was officially included in the union, although it was not yet liberated even in part.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Viceroyalty of New Granada included the Captaincy General of Venezuela and Presidency of Quito (the later Ecuador) in addition to New Granada proper, which was roughly equivalent to the present Colombia plus Panama and was the only area that came under the immediate administration of the viceroy. In the present volume "New Granada" will normally be used in this narrower sense. Naturally "Gran" Colombia, which took in all the territory of the former viceroyalty, was known in its lifetime only as Colombia—the "Gran" being added by later writers to distinguish it from its smaller namesake. [Ed.]

(xxviii) *Chronological Outline*

- 1820 September–October. Bolívar carried war into western Venezuelan Andes, penetrating as far as Trujillo.
- 1820 October 9. Overthrow of Spanish authorities at Guayaquil, by a local uprising.
- 1820 November 26. Bolívar signed an armistice with the royalist commander Morillo.
- 1821 April 17. Rupture of the armistice.
- 1821 May 6–October 14. Congress of Cúcuta, meeting as constituent assembly of the Republic of Colombia. Besides adopting a rigidly centralist constitution, it enacted such reform measures as the abolition of Indian tribute, law of free birth, and suppression of smaller convents with their assets to be used for public education.
- 1821 June 24. Victory of Bolívar in Battle of Carabobo, last major engagement of the war in Venezuela.
- 1821 June 29. Triumphal entry of Bolívar into Caracas.
- 1821 September 7. Bolívar chosen first President of Colombia, by the Congress of Cúcuta, with Santander as Vice-President.
- 1821 November 28. Panama declared its independence from Spain, following a bloodless revolution on the isthmus.
- 1821 December 13. Bolívar left Bogotá to continue the struggle against royalist forces in southern New Granada, leaving Santander as acting Colombian chief executive. (The Vice-President remained in charge continually until November 1826; he proved an energetic administrator and gradually extended the program of liberal reform initiated at Cúcuta.)
- 1822 May 24. Battle of Pichincha, won by General Antonio José de Sucre, whom Bolívar had sent ahead to invade the Ecuadoran highlands by way of Guayaquil. It opened the way for Sucre to occupy Quito and induced the royal-

ists still facing Bolívar in the south of New Granada to surrender.

- 1822 June 16. Entry of Bolívar into Quito.
- 1822 July 13. Bolívar, at Guayaquil, decreed its formal incorporation into Colombia.
- 1822 July 27. The Guayaquil interview with José de San Martín (Documents 6D and 16). Discussions concerned the political organization of the new nations and also, according to one school of thought, San Martín's requests for cooperation against the Spaniards in Peru. Whether because he failed to obtain from Bolívar all the help that he wanted, or because of opposition to his policies within Peru—or perhaps for a combination of reasons—San Martín resigned his power in Peru not long after he returned to Lima and withdrew from the country.
- 1823 March 17–April 12. Two major expeditionary forces sent by Bolívar to Peru. Bolívar was also being importuned to come in person to Peru, to assume direction of the war.
- 1823 August 2. Bolívar received word that the Colombian Congress had given him permission to go to Peru.
- 1823 August 7–September 1. Left Guayaquil and sailed to Callao.
- 1823 September–November. Struggle against dissident Peruvian government of José de la Riva-Agüero.
- 1824 February 5. Mutiny among patriot forces at Callao. The result was to deliver that strategic point, and shortly afterward Lima as well, to the royalists.
- 1824 February 10. In desperation, Peruvian Congress proclaimed Bolívar dictator.
- 1824 March 8. Established temporary government at Trujillo in northern Peru.
- 1824 August 6. Battle of Junín, won by Bolívar in Peruvian central highlands.

(xxx) *Chronological Outline*

- 1824 December 7. Bolívar, again in Lima, issued invitation to the nations of Spanish America to attend a conference at Panama.
- 1824 December 9. Battle of Ayacucho, won by Sucre against superior royalist forces; last major encounter of the war in South America.
- 1825 January–April. Royalist resistance in Upper Peru (modern Bolivia) crumbled under the impact of internal dissensions and invasion by Sucre.
- 1825 July 12. Bolívar wrote to José Joaquín Olmedo, offering a critique of the latter's poetic composition in honor of the victory of Junín (Document 6E).
- 1825 August 6. Formal creation of the Republic of Bolivia, by Upper Peruvian assembly.
- 1825 August 18. Triumphant entry of Bolívar into La Paz.
- 1825 August–January, 1826. Remained in Bolivia, assuming provisional direction of the new republic.
- 1826 March 15. Bolívar and Santander declared reelected President and Vice-President of Colombia.
- 1826 April 30. Outbreak of revolt of Páez in Venezuela. It was directed against the administration of Santander rather than against Bolívar, whom Páez and supporters urged to hasten home and solve the problems of Colombia. The underlying causes were rivalry and suspicion existing between Venezuela and New Granada and the dissatisfaction of Venezuelans with a centralized republic in which they were directly subordinated to authorities at Bogotá.
- 1826 May 25. From Lima, Bolívar submitted his draft constitution for Bolivia (Documents 4 and 5). He hoped that it might also be adopted in Colombia, in whole or in part; yet

the key provision for a life-term presidency caused it to be widely interpreted as a disguised form of monarchy, and it aroused little enthusiasm.

- 1826 June 22. Installation of the Panama Congress (Document 6F).
- 1826 September 3. Bolívar left Peru to return to Colombia.
- 1826 November 14. Reached Bogotá and briefly assumed control of administration. Ordered sweeping government economies but made few other changes, despite personal conviction that Santander had contributed to domestic unrest by unwise haste in implementing liberal measures.
- 1826 November 25. Bolívar continued toward Venezuela, leaving Santander again in control at Bogotá.
- 1827 January 1. Issued decree of amnesty for those implicated in the Venezuelan rebellion. The following day Páez accepted the amnesty and reaffirmed his loyalty to Bolívar.
- 1827 January–June. Bolívar remained in Venezuela, personally directing the government there. Meanwhile, he became the object of increasingly open and severe criticism by supporters of Santander, who resented his leniency toward Páez and suspected him of seeking to revamp Colombian institutions by unconstitutional means.
- 1827 July 5. Departed from La Guaira for Cartagena, leaving Páez in command of Venezuela.
- 1827 September 10. Reached Bogotá and again took control of the national administration.
- 1828 April 9–June 11. Convention of Ocaña, convoked to revise the Colombian constitution. It became deadlocked between the party of Bolívar, which sought to strengthen the executive

(xxxii) *Chronological Outline*

- power, and that of Santander, which now proposed to adopt a federalist regime. Dissolved with nothing accomplished.
- 1828 June–January 1830. Bowing to the petitions of his supporters that he “save the republic,” Bolívar established a frank dictatorship. In ecclesiastical and fiscal policy, it saw the full development of a conservative reaction already begun by Bolívar after his return to Bogotá in 1827, with executive decrees repealing or modifying many of the reforms which had been adopted starting at the Congress of Cúcuta.
- 1828 August–1829, September 22. War between Colombia and Peru, over an accumulation of generally minor affronts and disagreements. The situation was complicated by simultaneous appearance of revolutionary outbreaks in Colombia.
- 1828 September 25. Attempt made on Bolívar’s life by a group of conspirators who forced their way into the presidential palace seeking to kill the “tyrant.” Bolívar escaped through a window, thanks in part to the presence in the palace of his most famous mistress, Manuela Sáenz, who boldly confronted the assailants before they could reach the Liberator. Order was quickly restored, and there followed a wave of repression that included executions, exilings, and other measures against opponents of the dictatorship. Santander was among those suspected of complicity in the assassination attempt, and though evidence was inconclusive at best he was initially given a death sentence.
- 1828 October 20. Circular issued by the Secretary of Interior blaming recent “scandalous events” at least in part on the excessively liberal character of Colombian higher education and seeking to revive more traditional methods and content (Document 6G).



*Chronological Outline*      (xxxiii)

- 1828      December 28. Bolívar left Bogotá to take part in the Peruvian war.
- 1829      February 27. Battle of Tarqui, in which Sucre defeated Peruvian forces invading Ecuador.
- 1829      April–December. Bolívar's cabinet and other prominent supporters began laying groundwork for establishment of a European prince as monarch in Colombia, as eventual successor to Bolívar; European as well as domestic opinion was sounded out. It was assumed that Bolívar, though not consulted beforehand, would be in sympathy. His formal condemnation (November 22) finally caused the scheme to be abandoned, but not before it had further discredited the existing regime.
- 1829      November–December. Secessionist movement in Venezuela under Páez. Unlike the 1826 revolt, it was clearly directed against the existence of Colombia and rule of Bolívar.
- 1830      January 15. Bolívar returned to Bogotá.
- 1830      January 20. *Congreso Admirable*, a last attempt to solve the unrest afflicting Colombia by means of constitutional reform, opened at Bogotá. It did produce a new constitution, but by this time the latest Venezuelan rebellion had progressed to a point where no compromise with the principle of Colombian unity was possible. The Venezuelan example had also encouraged liberal oppositionists to become more active in New Granada.
- 1830      March 1. Bolívar stepped down from office in favor of General Domingo Caicedo, who became acting President.
- 1830      May 8. Left Bogotá for the coast, intending to go into voluntary exile.
- 1830      May 13. Secession of Ecuador, under leadership of General Juan José Flores.
- 1830      November 9. Letter to Flores, written en route to exile and expressing bitter disillusion-

(xxxiv)      *Chronological Outline*

ment over results of the independence struggle  
(Document 6H).

1830

December 17. Death of Bolívar at the estate  
San Pedro Alejandrino near Santa Marta.



# Life and Works

Simón Bolívar

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## The Cartagena Manifesto

*The so-called "Cartagena Manifesto" of December 1812—which strictly speaking was a published pamphlet entitled Memoria dirigida a los ciudadanos de la Nueva Granada por un caraqueño—is the first of the major Bolivarian texts. When he wrote it, Bolívar was a relatively obscure fugitive from royalist-held Venezuela. His purpose was to analyze the reasons for the fall of the First Republic, as a general warning against the repetition of its mistakes, and to enlist New Granada's support for a new attempt at liberating his homeland. In the process, he revealed several of the central themes that were to run through his political thought: an impatience with doctrinaire theorists ("benevolent visionaries"), a tough-minded insistence that laws and institutions for Spanish America must be closely adapted to local conditions, and the rejection of federalism in favor of a strong central executive.*

To spare New Granada the fate of Venezuela and to release the latter from its suffering are the objects which I have set for myself in this memorial. Condescend to accept

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it with indulgence, my Fellow-Citizens, for the sake of such laudable objectives.

I am, Granadans, a son of unhappy Caracas, who miraculously escaped from amidst her physical and political ruins; and, ever faithful to the liberal and just system proclaimed by my country, I have come here to follow the banners of independence, which so gloriously wave in these states.

Forgive me if I, inspired by patriotic zeal, take the liberty of addressing you, in order to sketch briefly the causes that brought Venezuela to its destruction. I flatter myself that the terrible and exemplary lessons which that defunct Republic has supplied may induce America to mend her ways and correct her shortcomings in unity, strength, and energy, which are apparent in her governments.

The most grievous error committed by Venezuela in making her start on the political stage was, as none can deny, her fatal adoption of the system of tolerance—a system long condemned as weak and inadequate by every man of common sense yet tenaciously maintained with an unparalleled blindness to the very end.

The first indication of senseless weakness demonstrated by our government was manifested in the case of the city of Coro, which, having refused to recognize the legitimacy of the government, was declared in rebellion and treated as an enemy. The supreme junta, instead of subjugating that undefended city, which would have surrendered as soon as our maritime forces had appeared off its harbor, gave it time to fortify itself and build up a strength so respectable that it later succeeded in subjugating the entire confederation almost as easily as we ourselves could previously have defeated it. The junta based its policy on poorly understood principles of humanity, which do not authorize governments to use force in order to liberate peoples who are ignorant of the value of their rights.

The codes consulted by our magistrates were not those which could teach them the practical science of government but were those devised by certain benevolent visionaries, who, creating fantastic republics in their imaginations, have sought to attain political perfection, assuming

the perfectibility of the human race. Thus we were given philosophers for leaders, philanthropy for legislation, dialectic for tactics, and sophists for soldiers. Through such a distortion of principles, the social order was thoroughly shaken, and from that time on the State made giant strides toward its general dissolution, which, indeed, shortly came to pass.

Thence was born an impunity toward crimes against the State. They were shamelessly committed by the malcontents, and particularly by our born and implacable enemies, the European Spaniards, who had schemingly remained in our country in order to keep it in continual turmoil and to foster whatever conspiracies our judges permitted them to organize, by always acquitting them even when their misdeeds were of such enormity as to endanger public welfare.

The doctrine which supported this procedure had its origin in the charitable maxims of a few writers who defend the thesis that no man is vested with the right to deprive another of his life even though he be guilty of the crime of treason. Under the cloak of this pious doctrine, every conspiracy was followed by acquittal; and every acquittal by another conspiracy, which again brought acquittal—all because a liberal government must be characterized by clemency. Criminal clemency, more than anything else, contributed to the destruction of the structure which we had not yet entirely completed!

Next came the firm opposition to raising seasoned, disciplined troops, prepared to take their place on the field of battle and indoctrinated with the desire to defend liberty with success and honor. Instead, innumerable undisciplined militia units were formed. The salaries paid the staff officers of these units exhausted the funds of the national treasury. Agriculture was destroyed because the farmers were torn from their homes; this brought odium upon the Government which had forced them to abandon their families and take up arms.

"Republics," said our statesmen, "have no need for hirelings to maintain their liberty. Every citizen will turn soldier when the enemy attacks us. Greece, Rome, Venice, Genoa, Switzerland, Holland, and recently North America

defeated their adversaries without the aid of mercenary troops, who stand always ready to support despotism and subjugate their fellow citizens."

What followed in Venezuela was bitter evidence of the error of her calculations. The militia that went to meet the enemy, not knowing how to handle arms and unaccustomed to discipline and obedience, was routed at the very beginning of the last campaign, notwithstanding the heroic and extraordinary efforts of their leaders to lead them to victory. This defeat caused general discouragement among soldiers and officers, for it is a military truth that only battle-hardened armies are capable of surmounting the first reverses of a campaign. The novice soldier believes all is lost when he has once been routed. Experience has not proved to him that bravery, skill, and perseverance can mend misfortune.

The dissipation of the public taxes for frivolous and harmful purposes, and particularly on salaries for an infinite number of officeholders, secretaries, judges, magistrates, and provincial and federal legislators dealt the Republic a mortal blow, since it was obliged to seek recourse in the dangerous expedient of issuing paper money, with no other guarantee than the probable revenues and backing of the Confederation. This new money, in the eyes of most people, was a direct violation of property rights, because they felt that they were being deprived of objects of intrinsic value in exchange for others of uncertain and even problematical worth. The paper money roused discontent among the otherwise indifferent people of the interior; hence, they called upon the commandant of the Spanish troops to come and free them from a currency which they regarded with a horror greater than slavery.

But what weakened the Venezuelan government most was the federal form it adopted in keeping with the exaggerated precepts of the rights of man; this form, by authorizing self-government, disrupts social contracts and reduces nations to anarchy. Such was the true state of the Confed-

eration. Each province governed itself independently; and, following this example, each city demanded like powers, based on the practice of the provinces and on the theory that all men and all peoples are entitled to establish arbitrarily the form of government that pleases them.

The federal system, although the most perfect and the most capable of providing for human happiness in society, is, nevertheless, the most contrary to the interests of our infant states. Generally speaking, our fellow-citizens are not yet able to exercise their rights themselves in the fullest measure, because they lack the political virtues that characterize true republicans—virtues that are not acquired under absolute governments, where the rights and duties of the citizen are not recognized.

Moreover, what country in the world, however well trained and republican it may be, can, amidst internal factions and foreign war, be governed by so complicated and weak a system as the federal? . . . It is essential that a government mold itself, so to speak, to the nature of the circumstances, the times, and the men that comprise it. If these factors are prosperity and peace, the government should be mild and protecting; but if they are turbulence and disaster, it should be stern and arm itself with a firmness that matches the dangers, without regard for laws or constitutions until happiness and peace have been reestablished.

Caracas was made to suffer severely by the shortcomings of the Confederation, which, far from aiding it, exhausted its treasury and war supplies. When danger threatened, the Confederation abandoned the city to its fate without assisting it with even a small contingent. The Confederation, moreover, created new difficulties, for the rivalry which developed between the federal and the provincial authorities enabled the enemies to penetrate deep into the heart of the State and to occupy a large part of the province before the question as to whether federal or provincial troops should go out to repel them was settled. This fatal debate resulted in a terrible and costly delay to our armies, for they were routed at San Carlos while awaiting the reinforcements needed for victory.



The popular elections held by the simple people of the country and by the scheming inhabitants of the city added a further obstacle to our practice of federation, because the former are so ignorant that they cast their votes mechanically and the latter so ambitious that they convert everything into factions. As a result, Venezuela never witnessed a free and proper election and the government was placed in the hands of men who were either inept, immoral, or opposed to the cause of independence. Party spirit determined everything and, consequently, caused us more disorganization than the circumstances themselves. Our division, not Spanish arms, returned us to slavery.

The earthquake of March 26, to be sure, was physically and morally destructive and can properly be termed the immediate cause of Venezuela's ruin; but this event could have happened without producing such fatal results had Caracas been governed at that time by a single authority, who, acting promptly and vigorously, could have repaired the damage without those hindrances and rivalries which retarded the effectiveness of the measures taken and allowed the evil to grow to such proportions that it is beyond remedy.

Following the earthquake, ecclesiastical influences played a very considerable part in the insurgency of the villages and smaller towns, and in bringing enemies into the country, thereby sacrilegiously abusing the sanctity of their office in behalf of the fomenters of civil war. We must, nevertheless, honestly confess that these traitorous priests were encouraged to commit the execrable crimes of which they are justly accused because they enjoyed absolute impunity for their crimes—an impunity which found scandalous support in the Congress. . . .

From the above it follows that among the causes that brought about Venezuela's downfall the nature of its Constitution ranks first, which, I repeat, was as contrary to Venezuela's interests as it was favorable to those of her adversaries; second, the spirit of misanthropy which possessed our governing officials; third, the opposition to the

establishment of a military force which could save the Republic and repulse the Spanish attacks; fourth, the earthquake, accompanied by a fanaticism that used this occurrence to its best advantage; and, last, the internal factions which in reality were the fatal poison that laid the country in its tomb.

These instances of error and misfortune will not be entirely without benefit to the peoples of South America who aspire to achieve liberty and independence.

New Granada has seen Venezuela succumb and should therefore avoid the pitfalls that destroyed the latter. To this end, I submit, as a measure indispensable for the security of New Granada, the reconquest of Caracas. At first sight this project will appear far-fetched, costly, perhaps impracticable; but, examined closely, with foresight and careful reflection, it is as impossible to deny its necessity as to fail to put it into execution once it is proved advisable.

Everything conspires to make us adopt this measure. In addition to the urgent necessity of closing the gates against the enemy, there are other reasons which force us to take the offensive, reasons so overwhelming that it would be a military error and a political blunder not to do so. . . . [It] is a principle of the art of war that every defensive action is harmful and ruinous for those who wage it, as it weakens them without hope of recovery. Hostilities in enemy territory, however, are always advantageous by reason of the good that results from the enemy's misfortunes; thus on no account should we employ the defensive.

We must also consider the present condition of the enemy, who is in a very critical position. The majority of his creole soldiers have deserted at a time when he is obliged to garrison the patriot cities of Caracas, Puerto Cabello, La Guayra, Barcelona, Cumaná, and Margarita, where he keeps his stores. He does not dare to leave these towns unguarded for fear of a general insurrection the moment he departs. Thus it would not be impossible for our troops to reach the gates of Caracas without engaging in a single open battle.

It is a certainty that, as soon as we enter Venezuela, we

will be joined by thousands of valiant patriots, who anxiously await our coming in order to throw off the yoke of their tyrants and unite their efforts with ours in the defense of liberty.

Let us, therefore, avail ourselves of a time so propitious, lest the reinforcements, which might at any moment arrive from Spain, completely alter the aspect of affairs, and lest we lose, perhaps forever, the welcome opportunity to insure the destiny of these states.

The honor of New Granada imperiously demands that she teach these audacious invaders a lesson, by pursuing them to their last entrenchments. Her good name depends upon her taking over the task of marching into Venezuela to free that cradle of Colombian independence, its martyrs, and the deserving people of Caracas, whose cries are addressed only to their beloved compatriots, the Granadans, whose arrival, as their redeemers, they await with despairing impatience. Let us hasten to break the chains of those victims who groan in the dungeons, ever hopeful of rescue. Make not a mockery of their trust. Be not insensible to the cries of your brothers. Fly to avenge the dead, to give life to the dying, to bring freedom to the oppressed and liberty to all.

Simón Bolívar

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## The Jamaica Letter

*Next comes the "Jamaica Letter," written in September 1815 when Bolívar was again an exile but no longer obscure. It presents in even more detail his view of the concrete difficulties that stood in the way of liberal and republican institutions in Spanish America and his consequent insistence on a strong centralized government as the only means of assuring even a modicum of liberal republicanism in practice; it indulges in some shrewd speculation concerning the future of Spanish America; and in typically Bolivarian fashion it reasserts unshaken confidence in final victory.*

. . . We are a young people. We inhabit a world apart, separated by broad seas. We are young in the ways of almost all the arts and sciences, although, in a certain manner, we are old in the ways of civilized society. I look upon the present state of America as similar to that of Rome after its fall. Each part of Rome adopted a political system conforming to its interest and situation or was led by the individual ambitions of certain chiefs, dynasties, or associations. But this important difference exists: those dispersed

parts later reestablished their ancient nations, subject to the changes imposed by circumstances or events. But we scarcely retain a vestige of what once was; we are, moreover, neither Indian nor European, but a species midway between the legitimate proprietors of this country and the Spanish usurpers. In short, though Americans by birth we derive our rights from Europe, and we have to assert these rights against the rights of the natives, and at the same time we must defend ourselves against the invaders. This places us in a most extraordinary and involved situation. Notwithstanding that it is a type of divination to predict the result of the political course which America is pursuing, I shall venture some conjectures which, of course, are colored by my enthusiasm and dictated by rational desires rather than by reasoned calculations.

The role of the inhabitants of the American hemisphere has for centuries been purely passive. Politically they were nonexistent. We are still in a position lower than slavery, and therefore it is more difficult for us to rise to the enjoyment of freedom. Permit me these transgressions in order to establish the issue. States are slaves because of either the nature or the misuse of their constitutions; a people is therefore enslaved when the government, by its nature or its vices, infringes on and usurps the rights of the citizen or subject. Applying these principles, we find that America was denied not only its freedom but even an active and effective tyranny. Let me explain. Under absolutism there are no recognized limits to the exercise of governmental powers. The will of the great sultan, khan, bey, and other despotic rulers is the supreme law, carried out more or less arbitrarily by the lesser pashas, khans, and satraps of Turkey and Persia, who have an organized system of oppression in which inferiors participate according to the authority vested in them. To them is entrusted the administration of civil, military, political, religious, and tax matters. But, after all is said and done, the rulers of Ispahan are Persians; the viziers of the Grand Turk are Turks; and the sultans of Tartary are Tartars. China does not bring its military leaders and scholars from the land of Genghis Khan, her conqueror, notwithstanding that the Chinese of today are the

lineal descendants of those who were reduced to subjection by the ancestors of the present-day Tartars.

How different is our situation! We have been harassed by a conduct which has not only deprived us of our rights but has kept us in a sort of permanent infancy with regard to public affairs. If we could at least have managed our domestic affairs and our internal administration, we could have acquainted ourselves with the processes and mechanics of public affairs. We should also have enjoyed a personal consideration, thereby commanding a certain unconscious respect from the people, which is so necessary to preserve amidst revolutions. That is why I say we have even been deprived of an active tyranny, since we have not been permitted to exercise its functions.

Americans today, and perhaps to a greater extent than ever before, who live within the Spanish system occupy a position in society no better than that of serfs destined for labor, or at best they have no more status than that of mere consumers. Yet even this status is surrounded with galling restrictions, such as being forbidden to grow European crops, or to store products which are royal monopolies, or to establish factories of a type the Peninsula itself does not possess. To this add the exclusive trading privileges, even in articles of prime necessity, and the barriers between American provinces, designed to prevent all exchange of trade, traffic, and understanding. In short, do you wish to know what our future held?—simply the cultivation of the fields of indigo, grain, coffee, sugar cane, cacao, and cotton; cattle raising on the broad plains; hunting wild game in the jungles; digging in the earth to mine its gold—but even these limitations could never satisfy the greed of Spain. So negative was our existence that I can find nothing comparable in any other civilized society. . . .

As I have just explained, we were cut off and, as it were, removed from the world in relation to the science of government and administration of the state. We were never viceroys or governors, save in the rarest of instances; seldom archbishops and bishops; diplomats never; as military men, only subordinates; as nobles, without royal privileges. In brief, we were neither magistrates nor financiers and sel-

dom merchants—all in flagrant contradiction to our institutions.

Emperor Charles V made a pact with the discoverers, conquerors, and settlers of America; and this, as Guerra puts it, is our social contract. The monarchs of Spain made a solemn agreement with them, to be carried out on their own account and at their own risk, expressly prohibiting them from drawing on the royal treasury. In return, they were made the lords of the land, entitled to organize the public administration and act as the court of last appeal, together with many other exemptions and privileges that are too numerous to mention. . . . Thus, for themselves and their descendants, the *conquistadores* possessed what were tantamount to feudal holdings. Yet there are explicit laws respecting employment in civil, ecclesiastical, and tax-raising establishments. These laws favor, almost exclusively, the natives of the country who are of Spanish extraction. Thus, by an outright violation of the laws and the existing agreements, those born in America have been despoiled of their constitutional rights as embodied in the code.

From what I have said it is easy to deduce that America was not prepared to secede from the mother country; this secession was suddenly brought about by the effect of the illegal concessions of Bayonne and the unrighteous war which the regency unjustly and illegally declared on us.<sup>1</sup> . . .

The first steps of all the new governments are marked by the establishment of juntas of the people. These juntas speedily draft rules for the calling of congresses, which produce great changes. Venezuela erected a democratic and federal government, after declaring for the rights of man. A system of checks and balances was established; and general laws were passed granting civil liberties, such as freedom of

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<sup>1</sup> The "concessions of Bayonne" represent the forced abdication of the Spanish royal family, imposed by Napoleon in 1808. When the Spanish Americans formed juntas of their own to govern in the absence of their legitimate monarch, the anti-Napoleonic rump government in Spain normally refused to recognize their authority to do so—hence the "unrighteous war" unleashed by the Spanish Council of Regency. [Ed.]

the press and others. In short, an independent government was created. New Granada uniformly followed the political institutions and reforms introduced by Venezuela, taking as the fundamental basis of her constitution the most elaborate federal system ever to be brought into existence. . . .

Events in Costa Firme<sup>2</sup> have proved that institutions which are wholly representative are not suited to our character, customs, and present knowledge. In Caracas party spirit arose in the societies, assemblies, and popular elections; these parties led us back into slavery. Thus, while Venezuela has been the American republic with the most advanced political institutions, she has also been the clearest example of the inefficacy of the democratic and federal system for our newborn states. In New Granada, the large number of excess powers held by the provincial governments and the lack of centralization in the general government have reduced that fair country to her present state. For this reason her foes, though weak, have been able to hold out against all odds. As long as our countrymen do not acquire the abilities and political virtues that distinguish our brothers of the north, wholly popular systems, far from working to our advantage, will, I greatly fear, bring about our downfall. Unfortunately, these traits, to the degree in which they are required, do not appear to be within our reach. On the contrary, we are dominated by the vices that one learns under the rule of a nation like Spain, which has only distinguished itself in ferocity, ambition, vindictiveness, and greed.

It is harder, Montesquieu has written, to release a nation from servitude than to enslave a free nation. This truth is proven by the annals of all times, which reveal that most free nations have been put under the yoke, but very few enslaved nations have recovered their liberty. Despite the convictions of history, South Americans have made efforts to obtain liberal, even perfect, institutions, doubtless out of that instinct to aspire to the greatest possible happiness, which, common to all men, is bound to follow in civil soci-

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<sup>2</sup> The "mainland" or Spanish Main; the northern coast of South America. [Ed.]



eties founded on the principles of justice, liberty, and equality. But are we capable of maintaining in proper balance the difficult charge of a republic? Is it conceivable that a newly emancipated people can soar to the heights of liberty, and, unlike Icarus, neither have its wings melt nor fall into an abyss? Such a marvel is inconceivable and without precedent. There is no reasonable probability to bolster our hopes.

M. de Pradt<sup>3</sup> has wisely divided America into fifteen or seventeen mutually independent states, governed by as many monarchs. I am in agreement on the first suggestion, as America can well tolerate seventeen nations; as to the second, though it could easily be achieved, it would serve no purpose. Consequently, I do not favor American monarchies. My reasons are these: The well-understood interest of a republic is limited to the matter of its preservation, prosperity, and glory. Republicans, because they do not desire powers which represent a directly contrary viewpoint, have no reason for expanding the boundaries of their nation to the detriment of their own resources solely for the purpose of having their neighbors share a liberal constitution. They would not acquire rights or secure any advantage by conquering their neighbors unless they were to make them colonies, conquered territory, or allies, after the example of Rome. But such thought and action are directly contrary to the principles of justice which characterize republican systems; and, what is more, they are in direct opposition to the interests of their citizens, because a state, too large of itself or together with its dependencies, ultimately falls into decay. Its free government becomes a tyranny. The principles that should preserve the government are disregarded, and finally it degenerates into despotism. The distinctive feature of small republics is permanence: that of large republics varies, but always with a tendency toward empire. Almost all small republics have had long lives. Among the larger republics, only Rome

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<sup>3</sup> The Abbé de Pradt, one of the leading European propagandists for Latin American independence. [Ed.]

lasted for several centuries, for its capital was a republic. The rest of her dominions were governed by divers laws and institutions.

The policy of a king is very different. His constant desire is to increase his possessions, wealth, and authority; and with justification, for his power grows with every acquisition, both with respect to his neighbors and his own vassals, who fear him because his power is as formidable as his empire, which he maintains by war and conquest. For these reasons I think that the Americans, being anxious for peace, science, art, commerce, and agriculture, would prefer republics to kingdoms. And, further, it seems to me that these desires conform with the aims of Europe.

We know little about the opinions prevailing in Buenos Aires, Chile, and Peru. Judging by what seeps through and by conjecture, Buenos Aires will have a central government in which the military, as a result of its internal dissensions and external wars, will have the upper hand. Such a constitutional system will necessarily degenerate into an oligarchy or a monarchy, with a variety of restrictions the exact nature of which no one can now foresee. It would be unfortunate if this situation were to follow because the people there deserve a more glorious destiny.

The Kingdom of Chile is destined, by the nature of its location, by the simple and virtuous character of its people, and by the example of its neighbors, the proud republicans of Arauco,<sup>4</sup> to enjoy the blessings that flow from the just and gentle laws of a republic. If any American republic is to have a long life, I am inclined to believe it will be Chile. There the spirit of liberty has never been extinguished; the vices of Europe and Asia arrived too late or not at all to corrupt the customs of that distant corner of the world. Its area is limited; and, as it is remote from other peoples, it will always remain free from contamination. Chile will not alter her laws, ways, and practices. She will preserve her uniform political and religious views. In a word, it is possible for Chile to be free.

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<sup>4</sup> The Araucanian Indians of southern Chile, whose resistance to Spanish rule had never been fully overcome. [Ed.]

Peru, on the contrary, contains two factors that clash with every just and liberal principle: gold and slaves. The former corrupts everything; the latter are themselves corrupt. The soul of a serf can seldom really appreciate true freedom. Either he loses his head in uprisings or his self-respect in chains. Although these remarks would be applicable to all America, I believe that they apply with greater justice to Lima, for the reasons I have given and because of the cooperation she has rendered her masters against her own brothers, those illustrious sons of Quito, Chile, and Buenos Aires. It is plain that he who aspires to obtain liberty will at least attempt to secure it. I imagine that in Lima the rich will not tolerate democracy, nor will the freed slaves and *pardos* accept aristocracy. The former will prefer the tyranny of a single man, to avoid the tumult of rebellion and to provide, at least, a peaceful system. If Peru intends to recover her independence, she has much to do.

From the foregoing, we can draw these conclusions: The American provinces are fighting for their freedom, and they will ultimately succeed. Some provinces as a matter of course will form federal and some central republics; the larger areas will inevitably establish monarchies, some of which will fare so badly that they will disintegrate in either present or future revolutions. To consolidate a great monarchy will be no easy task, but it will be utterly impossible to consolidate a great republic.

It is a grandiose idea to think of consolidating the New World into a single nation, united by pacts into a single bond. It is reasoned that, as these parts have a common origin, language, customs, and religion, they ought to have a single government to permit the newly formed states to unite in a confederation. But this is not possible. Actually, America is separated by climatic differences, geographic diversity, conflicting interests, and dissimilar characteristics. How beautiful it would be if the Isthmus of Panama could be for us what the Isthmus of Corinth was for the Greeks! Would to God that some day we may have the good fortune to convene there an august assembly of representatives of republics, kingdoms, and empires to deliberate upon the high interests of peace and war with the nations of the

other three-quarters of the globe. This type of organization may come to pass in some happier period of our regeneration. But any other plan, such as that of Abbé St. Pierre, who in laudable delirium conceived the idea of assembling a European congress to decide the fate and interests of those nations, would be meaningless.

Among the popular and representative systems, I do not favor the federal system. It is overperfect, and it demands political virtues and talents far superior to our own. For the same reason I reject a monarchy that is part aristocracy and part democracy, although with such a government England has achieved much fortune and splendor. Since it is not possible for us to select the most perfect and complete form of government, let us avoid falling into demagogic anarchy or monocratic tyranny. These opposite extremes would only wreck us on similar reefs of misfortune and dishonor; hence, we must seek a mean between them. I say: Do not adopt the best system of government but the one that is most likely to succeed.

By the nature of their geographic location, wealth, population, and character, I expect that the Mexicans, at the outset, intend to establish a representative republic in which the executive will have great powers. These will be concentrated in one person, who, if he discharges his duties with wisdom and justice, should almost certainly maintain his authority for life. If through incompetence or violence he should excite a popular revolt and it should be successful, this same executive power would then, perhaps, be distributed among the members of an assembly. If the dominant party is military or aristocratic, it will probably demand a monarchy that would be limited and constitutional at the outset, and would later inevitably degenerate into an absolute monarchy; . . . only a people as patriotic as the English are capable of controlling the authority of a king and of sustaining the spirit of liberty under the rule of scepter and crown.

The states of the Isthmus of Panama, as far as Guatemala, will perhaps form a confederation. Because of their magnificent position between two mighty oceans, they may in time become the emporium of the world. Their canals

will shorten distances throughout the world, strengthen commercial ties between Europe, America, and Asia, and bring to that happy area tribute from the four quarters of the globe. There some day, perhaps, the capital of the world may be located—reminiscent of the Emperor Constantine's claim that Byzantium was the capital of the ancient world.

New Granada will unite with Venezuela, if they can agree to the establishment of a central republic. Their capital may be Maracaibo or a new city to be named Las Casas (in honor of that humane hero) to be built on the borders of the two countries, in the excellent port area of Bahía-Honda. This location, though little known, is the most advantageous in all respects. It is readily accessible, and its situation is so strategic that it can be made impregnable. It has a fine, healthful climate, a soil as suitable for agriculture as for cattle raising, and a superabundance of good timber. The Indians living there can be civilized, and our territorial possessions could be increased with the acquisition of the Goajira Peninsula. This nation should be called Colombia as a just and grateful tribute to the discoverer of our hemisphere. Its government might follow the English pattern, except that in place of a king there will be an executive who will be elected, at most, for life, but his office will never be hereditary, if a republic is desired. There will be a hereditary legislative chamber or senate. This body can interpose itself between the violent demands of the people and the great powers of the government during periods of political unrest. The second representative body will be a legislature with restrictions no greater than those of the lower house in England. The Constitution will draw on all systems of government, but I do not want it to partake of all their vices. As Colombia is my country, I have an indisputable right to desire for her that form of government which, in my opinion, is best. It is very possible that New Granada may not care to recognize a central government, because she is greatly addicted to federalism; in such event, she will form a separate state which, if it endures, may prosper, because of its great and varied resources.

Surely unity is what we need to complete our work of regeneration. The division among us, nevertheless, is nothing extraordinary, for it is characteristic of civil wars to form two parties, *conservatives* and *reformers*. The former are commonly the more numerous, because the weight of habit induces obedience to established powers; the latter are always fewer in number although more vocal and learned. Thus, the physical mass of the one is counterbalanced by the moral force of the other; the contest is prolonged, and the results are uncertain. Fortunately, in our case, the mass has followed the learned.

I shall tell you with what we must provide ourselves in order to expel the Spaniards and to found a free government. It is *union*, obviously; but such union will come about through sensible planning and well-directed actions rather than by divine magic. America stands together because it is abandoned by all other nations. It is isolated in the center of the world. It has no diplomatic relations, nor does it receive any military assistance; instead, America is attacked by Spain, which has more military supplies than any we can possibly acquire through furtive means.

When success is not assured, when the state is weak, and when results are distantly seen, all men hesitate; opinion is divided, passions rage, and the enemy fans these passions in order to win an easy victory because of them. As soon as we are strong and under the guidance of a liberal nation which will lend us her protection, we will achieve accord in cultivating the virtues and talents that lead to glory. Then will we march majestically toward that great prosperity for which South America is destined. Then will those sciences and arts which, born in the East, have enlightened Europe, wing their way to a free Colombia, which will cordially bid them welcome. . . .

## Simón Bolívar

## The Angostura Address

*The Angostura Address is, in part, a report on his recent actions that Bolívar delivered to the Congress of Angostura in February 1819. Bolívar singles out just two developments for special mention; these are—significantly—the Liberator's offer of freedom to the slaves and his offer of a bonus in national property to patriot soldiers. The address is also a review of the political background of Spanish America, somewhat in the manner of the Jamaica Letter, which it virtually paraphrases on the existing obstacles to the establishment of free institutions. There is a lengthy discussion of the lessons to be learned from the governments of the ancient world and contemporary Europe and from the British constitution, which Bolívar so greatly admired. The Liberator offers some specific recommendations for a new constitution for Venezuela to replace that of 1811, which he regarded as nobly inspired but hopelessly impractical and which had in effect been suspended in all the territory under his control. The most important of these recommendations—hereditary senate and "moral power"—might well have been as impractical as the exaggerated federalism of 1811, but the second of the two was to*

*reappear later as the Chamber of Censors in the Liberator's draft of a constitution for Bolivia.*

*Gentlemen:*

In returning to the representatives of the people the Supreme Power which was entrusted to me, I gratify not only my own innermost desires but also those of my fellow citizens and of future generations, who trust to your wisdom, rectitude, and prudence in all things. Upon the fulfillment of this grateful obligation, I shall be released from the immense authority with which I have been burdened and from the unlimited responsibility which has weighed so heavily upon my slender resources. Only the force of necessity, coupled with the imperious will of the people, compelled me to assume the fearful and dangerous post of *Dictator and Supreme Chief of the Republic*. But now I can breathe more freely, for I am returning to you this authority which I have succeeded in maintaining at the price of so much danger, hardship, and suffering, amidst the worst tribulations suffered by any society.

*Legislators!* I deliver into your hands the supreme rule of Venezuela. . . . At this moment the Supreme Chief of the Republic is no more than just a plain citizen, and such he wishes to remain until his death. I shall, however, serve as a soldier so long as any foe remains in Venezuela. Our country has a multitude of worthy sons who are capable of directing her progress. Talent, virtue, experience, and all else needed to command free men are the heritage of many who represent the people here; and outside this Sovereign Body there are citizens who at all times have shown courage in facing danger, prudence in avoiding it, and the ability, moreover, to govern themselves and others. These illustrious men will undoubtedly deserve the support of the Congress, and they will be entrusted with the government which I now so sincerely and gladly relinquish forever.

The continuance of authority in the same individual has frequently meant the end of democratic governments. Re-



peated elections are essential in popular systems of government, for nothing is more perilous than to permit one citizen to retain power for an extended period. The people become accustomed to obeying him, and he forms the habit of commanding them; herein lie the origins of usurpation and tyranny. A just zeal is the guarantee of republican liberty. Our citizens must with good reason learn to fear lest the magistrate who has governed them long will govern them forever.

Since, therefore, by this profession of mine in support of Venezuela's freedom I may aspire to the glory of being reckoned among her most faithful sons, allow me, Gentlemen, to expound, with the frankness of a true republican, my respectful opinion on a *Plan of a Constitution*, which I take the liberty of submitting to you . . . I implore you, gentlemen, receive this work with benevolence, for it is more a tribute of my sincere deference to the Congress than an act of presumption. Moreover, as your function is to create a body politic, or, it might be said, to create an entire society while surrounded by every obstacle that a most peculiar and difficult situation can present, perhaps the voice of one citizen may reveal the presence of a hidden or unknown danger. Let us review the past to discover the base upon which the Republic of Venezuela is founded.<sup>1</sup>

The more I admire the excellence of the federal Constitution of Venezuela, the more I am convinced of the impossibility of its application to our state. And, to my way of thinking, it is a marvel that its prototype in North America endures so successfully and has not been overthrown at the first sign of adversity or danger. Although the people of North America are a singular model of political virtue and moral rectitude; although that nation was cradled in liberty, reared on freedom, and maintained by liberty alone; and—I must reveal everything—although those people, so lacking in many respects, are unique in the history of mankind, it is

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<sup>1</sup> Bolívar proceeds at this point to discuss the historical background of Spanish America in much the same terms as in the Jamaica Letter, Document 2. [Ed.]

a marvel, I repeat, that so weak and complicated a government as the federal system has managed to govern them in the difficult and trying circumstances of their past. But, regardless of the effectiveness of this form of government with respect to North America, I must say that it has never for a moment entered my mind to compare the position and character of two states as dissimilar as the English American and the Spanish American. Would it not be most difficult to apply to Spain the English system of political, civil, and religious liberty? Hence, it would be even more difficult to adapt to Venezuela the laws of North America. Does not *L'Esprit des lois* state that laws should be suited to the people for whom they are made; that it would be a major coincidence if those of one nation could be adapted to another; that laws must take into account the physical conditions of the country, climate, character of the land, location, size, and mode of living of the people; that they should be in keeping with the degree of liberty that the Constitution can sanction respecting the religion of the inhabitants, their inclinations, resources, number, commerce, habits, and customs? This is the code we must consult, not the code of Washington!

The Venezuelan Constitution, although based upon the most perfect of constitutions from the standpoint of the correctness of its principles and the beneficent effects of its administration, differed fundamentally from the North American Constitution on one cardinal point, and, without doubt, the most important point. The Congress of Venezuela, like the North American legislative body, participates in some of the duties vested in the executive power. We, however, have subdivided the executive power by vesting it in a collective body. . . . Our executive triumvirate lacks, so to speak, unity, continuity, and individual responsibility. It is deprived of prompt action, continuous existence, true uniformity, and direct responsibility. The government that does not possess these things which give it a morality of its own must be deemed a nonentity.

Permit me to call the attention of the Congress to a matter that may be of vital importance. We must keep in mind

that our people are neither European nor North American; rather, they are a mixture of African and the Americans who originated in Europe. Even Spain herself has ceased to be European because of her African blood, her institutions, and her character. It is impossible to determine with any degree of accuracy where we belong in the human family. The greater portion of the native Indians has been annihilated; Spaniards have mixed with Americans and Africans, and Africans with Indians and Spaniards. While we have all been born of the same mother, our fathers, different in origin and in blood, are foreigners, and all differ visibly as to the color of their skin—a dissimilarity which places upon us an obligation of the greatest importance.

Under the Constitution, which interprets the laws of Nature, all citizens of Venezuela enjoy complete political equality. Although equality may not have been the political dogma of Athens, France, or North America, we must consecrate it here in order to correct the disparity that apparently exists. My opinion, Legislators, is that the fundamental basis of our political system hinges directly and exclusively upon the establishment and practice of equality in Venezuela. Most wise men concede that men are born with equal rights to share the benefits of society, but it does not follow that all men are born equally gifted to attain every rank. All men should practice virtue, but not all do; all ought to be courageous, but not all are; all should possess talents, but not everyone does. Herein are the real distinctions which can be observed among individuals even in the most liberally constituted society. If the principle of political equality is generally recognized, so also must be the principle of physical and moral inequality. Nature makes men unequal in intelligence, temperament, strength, and character. Laws correct this disparity by so placing the individual within society that education, industry, arts, services, and virtues give him a fictitious equality that is properly termed political and social. The idea of a classless state, wherein diversity increases in proportion to the rise in population, was an eminently beneficial inspiration. By this step alone, cruel discord has been completely eliminated.

How much jealousy, rivalry, and hate have thus been averted!

Having dealt with justice and humanity, let us now give attention to politics and society, . . . The diversity of racial origin will require an infinitely firm hand and great tactfulness in order to manage this heterogeneous society, whose complicated mechanism is easily damaged, separated, and disintegrated by the slightest controversy.

Venezuela had, has, and should have a republican government. Its principles should be the sovereignty of the people, division of powers, civil liberty, proscription of slavery, and the abolition of monarchy and privileges. We need equality to recast, so to speak, into a unified nation, the classes of men, political opinions, and public customs. Let us now consider the vast field of problems yet to be traversed. Let us focus our attention upon the dangers we must avoid. Let history serve us as a guide in this survey. First, Athens affords us the most brilliant example of an absolute democracy, but at the same time Athens herself is the most melancholy example of the extreme weakness of this type of government. The wisest legislator in Greece did not see his republic survive ten years; and he suffered the humiliation of admitting that absolute democracy is inadequate in governing any form of society, even the most cultured, temperate, and limited, because its brilliance comes only in lightning flashes of liberty. We must recognize, therefore, that, although Solon disillusioned the world, he demonstrated to society how difficult it is to govern men by laws alone.

The Roman Constitution brought power and fortune such as no other people in the world have ever known. It did not provide for an exact distribution of powers. The consuls, senate, and people were alternately legislators, magistrates, and judges; everyone participated in all powers. The executive, comprising two consuls, was subject to the same weakness as was that of Sparta [under the rule of two kings]. Despite this weakness, the republic did not experience the disastrous discord that would appear to have

been unavoidable in a magistrature composed of two individuals with equal authority, each possessing the powers of a monarch. A government whose sole purpose was conquest would hardly seem destined to insure the happiness of a nation; but an enormous and strictly warlike government lifted Rome to the highest splendor of virtue and glory, and made of this earth a Roman dominion, thereby demonstrating to man what political virtues can accomplish and the relative unimportance of institutions.

Passing from ancient to modern times, we find England and France attracting the attention of all nations and affording them a variety of lessons in matters of government. The evolution [*revolución*] of these two great peoples, like a flaming meteor, has flooded the world with such a profusion of political enlightenment that today every thinking person is aware of the rights and duties of man and the nature of the virtues and vices of governments. All can now appreciate the intrinsic merit of the speculative theories of modern philosophers and legislators. In fact, this political star, in its illuminating career, has even fired the hearts of the apathetic Spaniards, who, having also been thrown into the political whirlpool, made ephemeral efforts to establish liberty; but, recognizing their incapacity for living under the sweet rule of law, they have returned to their immemorial practices of imprisonment and burnings at the stake.

Among the ancient and modern nations, Rome and Great Britain are the most outstanding. Both were born to govern and to be free and both were built not on ostentatious forms of freedom, but upon solid institutions. Thus I recommend to you, Representatives, the study of the British Constitution, for that body of laws appears destined to bring about the greatest possible good for the peoples that adopt it; but, however perfect it may be, I am by no means proposing that you imitate it slavishly. When I speak of the British government, I only refer to its republican features; and, indeed, can a political system be labeled a monarchy when it recognizes popular sovereignty, division and balance of powers, civil liberty, freedom of conscience and of

press, and all that is politically sublime? Can there be more liberty in any other type of republic? Can more be asked of any society? I commend this Constitution to you as that most worthy of serving as model for those who aspire to the enjoyment of the rights of man and who seek all the political happiness which is compatible with the frailty of human nature.

Nothing in our fundamental laws would have to be altered were we to adopt a legislative power similar to that held by the British Parliament. Like the North Americans, we have divided national representation into two chambers: that of Representatives and the Senate. The first is very wisely constituted. It enjoys all its proper functions, and it requires no essential revision because the Constitution, in creating it, gave it the form and powers which the people deemed necessary in order that they might be legally and properly represented. If the Senate were hereditary rather than elective, it would, in my opinion, be the basis, the tie, the very soul of our republic. In political storms this body would arrest the thunderbolts of the government and would repel any violent popular reaction. Devoted to the government because of a natural interest in its own preservation, a hereditary senate would always oppose any attempt on the part of the people to infringe upon the jurisdiction and authority of their magistrates. It must be confessed that most men are unaware of their best interests and that they constantly endeavor to assail them in the hands of their custodians—the individual clashes with the mass, and the mass with authority. It is necessary, therefore, that in all governments there be a neutral body to protect the injured and disarm the offender. To be neutral, this body must not owe its origin to appointment by the government or to election by the people, if it is to enjoy a full measure of independence which neither fears nor expects anything from these two sources of authority. The hereditary senate, as a part of the people, shares its interests, its sentiments, and its spirit. For this reason it should not be presumed that a hereditary senate would ignore the interests of the people or forget its legislative duties. The senators in Rome and in the House of Lords in London have been the strongest pillars upon

which the edifice of political and civil liberty has rested.

At the outset, these senators should be elected by Congress. The successors to this Senate must command the initial attention of the government, which should educate them in a *colegio* designed especially to train these guardians and future legislators of the nation. They ought to learn the arts, sciences, and letters that enrich the mind of a public figure. From childhood they should understand the career for which they have been destined by Providence, and from earliest youth they should prepare their minds for the dignity that awaits them.

The creation of a hereditary senate would in no way be a violation of political equality. I do not solicit the establishment of a nobility, for, as a celebrated republican has said, that would simultaneously destroy equality and liberty. What I propose is an office for which the candidates must prepare themselves, an office that demands great knowledge and the ability to acquire such knowledge. All should not be left to chance and the outcome of elections. The people are more easily deceived than is Nature perfected by art; and, although these senators, it is true, would not be bred in an environment that is all virtue, it is equally true that they would be raised in an atmosphere of enlightened education. Furthermore, the liberators of Venezuela are entitled to occupy forever a high rank in the Republic that they have brought into existence. I believe that posterity would view with regret the effacement of the illustrious names of its first benefactors. I say, moreover, that it is a matter of public interest and national honor, of gratitude on Venezuela's part, to honor gloriously, until the end of time, a race of virtuous, prudent, and persevering men who, overcoming every obstacle, have founded the Republic at the price of the most heroic sacrifices. And if the people of Venezuela do not applaud the elevation of their benefactors, then they are unworthy to be free, and they will never be free.

. . . We will find that the balance of power between the branches of government must be distributed in two ways. In republics the executive should be the stronger, for everything conspires against it; while in monarchies the legislative power should be superior, as everything works in the

monarch's favor. . . . The splendor inherent in the throne, the crown, and the purple; the formidable support that it receives from the nobility; the immense wealth that a dynasty accumulates from generation to generation; and the fraternal protection that kings grant to one another are the significant advantages that work in favor of royal authority, thereby rendering it almost unlimited. Consequently, the significance of these same advantages should serve to justify the necessity of investing the chief magistrate of a republic with a greater measure of authority than that possessed by a constitutional prince.

A republican magistrate is an individual set apart from society, charged with checking the impulse of the people toward license and the propensity of judges and administrators toward abuse of the laws. He is directly subject to the legislative body, the senate, and the people: he is the one man who resists the combined pressure of the opinions, interests, and passions of the social state and who, as Carnot states, does little more than struggle constantly with the urge to dominate and the desire to escape domination. He is, in brief, an athlete pitted against a multitude of athletes.

This weakness can only be corrected by a strongly rooted force. It should be strongly proportioned to meet the resistance which the executive must expect from the legislature, from the judiciary, and from the people of a republic. Unless the executive has easy access to all the [administrative] resources, fixed by a just distribution of powers, he inevitably becomes a nonentity or abuses his authority. By this I mean that the result will be the death of the government, whose heirs are anarchy, usurpation, and tyranny. Some seek to check the executive authority by curbs and restrictions, and nothing is more just; but it must be remembered that the bonds we seek to preserve should, of course, be strengthened, but not tightened.

Therefore, let the entire system of government be strengthened . . . Precisely because no form of government is so weak as the democratic, its framework must be firmer, and its institutions must be studied to determine their degree of stability.

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Popular education should be the primary concern of the paternal love of Congress. Morality and enlightenment are the foundations of a republic; morality and enlightenment constitute our primary needs. From Athens let us take her Areopagus and her guardians of custom and law; from Rome, her censors and domestic tribunals; and, having effected a holy alliance of these moral institutions, let us revive in the world the idea of a people who, not content to be free and strong, desire also to be virtuous. From Sparta let us take her austere institutions; and, when from these three springs we have made a fountain of virtue, let us endow our republic with a fourth power having jurisdiction over the youth, the hearts of men, public spirit, good customs, and republican ethics. Let us establish an Areopagus to watch over the education of our youth and to promote national enlightenment, in order that it may purify every instance of corruption in the Republic and denounce ingratitude, selfishness, indifferent love of country, and idleness and negligence on the part of the citizens, that it may judge the first signs of corruption and of evil example, using moral penalties to correct violations of customs, even as criminals are punished by corporal penalties. Such action should be taken not only against that which conflicts with customs, but also against that which mocks them; not only against that which attacks them, but against that which weakens them; not only against that which violates the Constitution, but also against that which outrages public decency. The jurisdiction of this truly sacred tribunal should be effective with respect to education and enlightenment, but advisory only with regard to penalties and punishments. But its annals or registers containing its acts and deliberations, which will, in effect, record the ethical precepts and the actions of citizens, should be the public books of virtue and vice. These books would be consulted [for guidance] by the people in elections, by the magistrates in their decisions, and by the judges in rendering verdicts. Such an institution, chimerical as it may appear, is infinitely more feasible than others which certain ancient and modern legislators have established with less benefit to mankind.

*Legislators!* In the plan of a constitution that I most re-

spectfully submit to your better wisdom, you will observe the spirit in which it was conceived. In proposing to you a division of citizens into active and passive groups,<sup>2</sup> I have endeavored to promote the national prosperity by means of the two greatest levers of industry: work and knowledge. By activating these two powerful mainsprings of society, we can achieve the most difficult of accomplishments among men—that of making them honest and happy. By setting just and prudent restrictions upon the primary and electoral assemblies, we can put the first check on popular license, thereby avoiding the blind, clamorous conventions that have in all times placed the stamp of error on elections, an error that consequently carries over to the magistrates and in turn to the conduct of the government; for the initial act of election is the one by which a people creates either liberty or slavery.

In separating the executive jurisdiction from that of the legislature by means of well-defined boundaries, it is my intention not to divide but rather to unite these supreme powers through those bonds that are born of independence, for any prolonged conflict between these powers has never failed to destroy one of the contenders. In seeking to vest in the executive authority a sum total of powers greater than that which it previously enjoyed, I have no desire to grant a despot the authority to tyrannize the Republic, but I do wish to prevent deliberative despotism from being the immediate source of a vicious circle of despotic situations, in which anarchy alternates with oligarchy and monocracy. In requesting tenure for judges and the establishment of juries and a new code of law, I have asked the Congress to guarantee civil liberty, the most precious, the most just, the most necessary, in a word, the only liberty, since without it the others are nothing. I have solicited the correction of the most lamentable abuses in our judiciary. These abuses had their vicious origin in that welter of Spanish legislation which, like time itself, was collected from all ages and from

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<sup>2</sup> According to Bolívar's proposal, those who lacked certain economic and literacy qualifications would be "passive citizens," unable to vote. [Ed.]

all men, whether the works of the sane or of the demented, whether the creations of brilliant or of extravagant minds, and whether gathered from monuments of human thought or of human caprice. This judicial compendium, a monster of ten thousand heads, which, to this day, has been the curse of the Spanish peoples, is the most subtle punishment that the wrath of Heaven could have inflicted upon this unfortunate empire.

After meditating upon the most effective means of regenerating the characteristics and customs bred in us by tyranny and war, I have dared to devise a moral power, drawn from the depths of remote antiquity and specifically from those forgotten laws that long maintained qualities of virtue among the Greeks and Romans. It may well be looked upon as sheer delirium, but it is not an impossibility, and I flatter myself that you may not wholly reject an idea which, if perfected by experience and learning, may prove to be very effective.

Horried by the disagreement that has reigned and will continue to reign among us owing to the subtle nature which characterizes the federal government, I am impelled to request that you adopt a central form of government, uniting all the states of Venezuela into a republic, one and indivisible. This measure, which I regard as urgent, vital, and redeeming, is of such a nature that, unless it is adopted, death will be the fruit of our rebirth.

I would not dwell upon the most notable acts of my command did they not concern the majority of Venezuelans. I refer, Gentlemen, to the more important resolutions of this most recent period. The dark mantle of barbarous and profane slavery covered the Venezuelan earth, and our sky was heavy with stormy clouds, which threatened to rain a deluge of fire. I implored the protection of the God of Humanity, and redemption soon dispersed the tempests. Slavery broke its fetters, and Venezuela was filled with new sons, grateful sons who have forged the instruments of their captivity into weapons of freedom. Yes, those who once were slaves are now free: those who once were the embittered enemies of a stepmother are now the proud defenders

of their own country. To describe the justice, the necessity, and the beneficent results of this measure would be superfluous, for you know the history of the Helots, of Spartacus, and of Haiti; and because you know that one cannot be both free and enslaved at the same time, without simultaneously violating every natural, political, and civil law, I leave to your sovereign decision the reform or the repeal of all my statutes and decrees; but I plead for the confirmation of the absolute freedom of the slaves, as I would plead for my very life and for the life of the Republic.

To recount for you the military history of Venezuela would be to recall the history of republican heroism among the ancients; it would but point out to you that Venezuela has her place in the great record of sacrifices made on the altar of liberty. Nothing could fill the noble breasts of our generous warriors except the sublime honors that are granted to the benefactors of mankind. As they have fought neither for power, nor for fortune, nor even for glory, but for liberty alone, the title of Liberators of the Republic is their just reward. I, therefore, have founded a sacred society of these illustrious men and created the Order of the Liberators of Venezuela. Legislators! Yours is the power to grant honors and decorations; it is your duty to carry out this august act of national gratitude.

Men who have given up all the pleasures and possessions that they have acquired by their diligence and talents; men who have experienced every cruelty of a horrible war and who have suffered the bitterest privations and the severest torments; men so well-deserving of the nation demand the attention of the government; therefore, I have ordered them to be compensated out of the public domain. If I have earned any merit whatsoever in the eyes of the people, I ask their representatives simply to heed my petition as reward for my humble services. Let the Congress order the distribution of the national property pursuant to the law<sup>3</sup> which I, in the name of the Republic, have decreed in behalf of the soldiers of Venezuela.

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<sup>3</sup> Document 6C. [Ed.]

The uniting of New Granada and Venezuela into one great state has been the constant wish of the peoples and governments of these republics. The fortunes of war have effected this merger so earnestly desired by all Colombians: in fact, we are now a single state. These brother peoples have already entrusted to you their interests, their rights, and their destinies.

As I contemplate the reunion of this territory, my soul ascends to the heights necessary to view the mighty panorama afforded by this astounding picture. My imagination, taking flight to the ages to come, is captured by the vision of future centuries, and when, from that vantage point, I observe with admiration and amazement the prosperity, the splendor, the fullness of life which will then flourish in this vast region, I am overwhelmed. I seem to behold my country as the very heart of the universe, its far-flung shores spreading between those oceans which Nature kept apart but which our country will have joined by an imposing system of extensive canals. I can see her serving as the bond, the center, and the emporium of the human race. I behold her shipping to all corners of the earth the treasures of silver and gold which lie hidden in her mountains. I can see her dispensing, by means of her divine plants, health and life to the ailing of the Old World. I can see her confiding her precious secrets to the learned men who do not know that her store of knowledge is superior to the wealth with which Nature has prodigally endowed her. I can see her crowned by glory, seated upon the throne of liberty with the sceptre of Justice in her hand, disclosing to the Old World the majesty of the New.

I pray you, Legislators, receive with indulgence this profession of my political faith, . . . I pray you, grant to Venezuela a government preeminently popular, preeminently just, preeminently moral; one that will suppress anarchy, oppression, and guilt—a government that will usher in the reign of innocence, humanity, and peace; a government wherein the rule of inexorable law will signify the triumph of equality and freedom.

Gentlemen: you may begin your labors, I have finished mine.

Simón Bolívar

## Address on the Bolivian Constitution

*The address with which Bolívar submitted his draft constitution for Bolivia in May 1826 is a relatively brief and straightforward document, which explains and justifies the key features of his creation but lacks the prophetic tone of the Jamaica Letter and the detailed exposition of political philosophy of the Angostura Address. The draft itself and accompanying address have been cited both as further proof of his political genius and as an indication that his powers as a thinker were beginning to decline. Still evident are his search for a means to reconcile liberty and order and his desire to mold institutions to the Spanish American environment. Moreover, his defense of the life-term presidency, the most controversial aspect of the Bolivian constitution, is at first glance persuasive. Yet it is hard to escape the conclusion that Bolívar, in proposing what was truly a constitutional monarchy with republican trappings, had lost that sense of reality which had always led him to insist that monarchy per se could not take root in independent Spanish America. Certain other aspects of the Liberator's proposal, such as a three-house legislature, were not*

*much if at all more practical. Indeed the Bolivian constitution was probably as exotic as any of the creations of the doctrinaire republicans for whom Bolívar showed such contempt.*

*Legislators:*

In submitting to you my draft of a constitution for Bolivia, I am overcome with embarrassment and trepidation, for I am convinced that I am not qualified as a lawgiver. When I reflect that all the wisdom of the ages has not been sufficient for the drafting of a perfect fundamental law and that the most enlightened legislator has been the direct promoter of human misery, in travesty, as it were, of his divine mission—what can I say of a soldier who, born among slaves and isolated in the wildest section of his country, has known only captives in chains and his comrades-in-arms, pledged to unshackle them? I, a legislator! . . . I do not know who suffers most in this terrible dilemma—you, for the evils that may result from the laws you have asked of me, or I, for the opprobrium to which you have condemned me by your confidence.

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*Legislators!* Your duty compels you to avoid a struggle with two monstrous enemies, who, although they are themselves ever locked in mortal combat, will attack you at once. *Tyranny* and *anarchy* constitute an immense sea of oppression encircling a tiny island of freedom that is perpetually battered by the forces of the waves and the hurricane that ceaselessly threatens to submerge it. Beware, then, of the sea that you are about to cross in a fragile bark with so inexperienced a pilot at the helm.

My draft of a constitution for Bolivia provides for four branches of government, an additional one having been devised without affecting the time-honored powers of any of the others. The electoral branch has been accorded powers not granted it in other reputedly very liberal governments. These powers resemble, in great part, those of the federal system. I have thought it expedient and desirable, and also

feasible, to accord to the most direct representatives of the people privileges that the citizens of every department, province, and canton probably desire most. Nothing is more important to a citizen than the right to elect his legislators, governors, judges, and pastors. The electoral college of each province represents its needs and interests and serves as a forum from which to denounce any infractions of the laws or abuses of the magistrates. I might, with some truth, describe this as a form of representation providing the rights enjoyed by individual governments in federal systems. In this manner, additional weight has been placed in the balance to check the executive; the government will acquire greater guarantees, a more popular character, and a greater claim to be numbered among the most democratic of governments.

Every ten citizens will elect one elector, and thus the nation will be represented by a tenth of its citizens. Ability is the only prerequisite for this post. It is not necessary to possess property to have the august right of representing popular sovereignty. The elector must, however, be able to write out his ballots, sign his name, and read the laws. He must be skilled in some trade or useful art that assures him an honest living. The only disqualifications are those of crime, idleness, and utter ignorance. Understanding and honesty, rather than wealth, are the sole requirements for exercising the public trust.

The legislative body is so composed that its parts will necessarily be in harmony. It will not find itself divided for lack of an arbiter, as is the case where there are only two chambers. Since this legislature has three parts, disagreement between two can be settled by the third. The issue is thus examined by two contending parties and decided by an impartial third party. In this way no useful law is without effect; at least it shall have been reviewed once, twice, and a third time before being discarded. In all matters between two contending parties, a third party is named to render the decision. Would it not be absurd, therefore, if, in matters of the deepest concern to the nation, this expedient, dictated by practical necessity, were scorned? The chambers will thus observe toward each other the consideration which is



indispensable in preserving the unity of the Congress, which must deliberate without passion and with the calm of wisdom. Our modern congresses, I shall be told, consist of only two houses. This is because England, which has provided the model, was forced to have the nobility and the people represented in two chambers; and, while the same pattern was followed in North America where there is no nobility, it may be presumed that the habits acquired under British rule inspired this imitation. The fact is that two deliberating bodies are always found to be in conflict. It was for this reason that Sieyès insisted on only one—a classic error.

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The President of the Republic, in our Constitution, becomes the sun which, fixed in its orbit, imparts life to the universe. This supreme authority must be perpetual, for in non-hierarchical systems, more than in others, a fixed point is needed about which leaders and citizens, men and affairs can revolve. "Give me a point where I may stand," said an ancient sage, "and I will move the earth." For Bolivia this point is the life-term President [*presidente vitalicio*]. Upon him rests our entire order, notwithstanding his lack of powers. Not only has he been rendered headless in order that none may fear his intentions, but his hands have been tied so that he can do no harm.

The President of Bolivia enjoys many of the powers of the [North] American chief executive but with limitations that favor the people. His term of office is that enjoyed by the President of Haiti. For Bolivia, I have borrowed the executive system of the most democratic republic in the world.

The island of Haiti, if you will permit the digression, was in a state of perpetual insurrection. Having experimented with an empire, a kingdom, and a republic, in fact every known type of government and more besides, the people were compelled to call upon the illustrious Pétion to save them. After they had put their trust in him, Haiti's destinies pursued a steady course. Pétion was made President for life, with the right to choose his successor. Thus, neither

the death of that great man nor the advent of a new president imperiled that state in the slightest. Under the worthy Boyer, everything has proceeded as tranquilly as in a legitimate monarchy. There you have conclusive proof that *a life-term president, with the power to choose his successor*, is the most sublime inspiration amongst republican regimes.

The President of Bolivia will be less dangerous than the President of Haiti, as the succession is provided for in a manner that better secures the interests of the state. Moreover, the President of Bolivia is deprived of all patronage. He can appoint neither governors, nor judges, nor ecclesiastic dignitaries of any kind. This limitation of powers has never before been imposed in any constituted government. One check after another has thus been placed upon the authority of the head of the government, who will in every way find that the people are ruled directly by those who exercise the significant functions of the commonwealth. The priests will rule in matters of conscience, the judges in matters involving property, honor, and life, and the magistrates or men of state in all major public acts. As they owe their position, their distinction, and their fortune to the people alone, the President cannot hope to entangle them in his personal ambitions. If to this is added the natural growth of opposition which a democratic government experiences throughout the course of its administration, there is reason to believe that, under this form of government, usurpation of the popular sovereignty is less likely to occur than under any other.

Legislators, from this day forth liberty will be indestructible in America. Observe the savage character of our continent, which of itself bars a monarchical order, for the deserts invite independence. Here, there are no great nobles or churchmen. Our wealth has amounted to little, and it is no greater today. The Church, though not without influence, is far from seeking domination as it is satisfied to insure its own preservation. Without these supporting factors, tyrants cannot survive; and, should any ambitious soul aspire to make himself emperor, there are Dessalines, Christophe, and Iturbide to warn him of what he may expect. No power

is harder to maintain than that of a newly crowned prince. This truth, which is stronger than empires, defeated Bonaparte, the conqueror of all armies. If the great Napoleon could not maintain himself against an alliance of republicans and aristocrats, who then in America will undertake to establish monarchies upon a soil fired with the bright flames of liberty, which would consume the very pillars intended to support the royalist structure? . . .

The constitutional limitations upon the President of Bolivia are the narrowest ever known. He can appoint only the officials of the Ministries of the Treasury, Peace, and War; and he is Commander in Chief of the army. These are his only powers.

Administration is the province of the Cabinet, which is responsible to the Censors and subject to the close vigilance of every legislator, governor, judge, and citizen. The revenue officers and soldiers, who are agents of the Cabinet alone, are hardly the persons calculated to make it the object of public affection, and therefore its influence will be next to nothing.

Of all the higher officials, the Vice President is the one with the most limited power. He must obey both the legislative and the executive branches of a republican government. From the former, he receives the laws, and from the latter his instructions, and he must proceed between these two branches, following the narrowest of paths, . . .

In the government of the United States it has of late become the practice for the Secretary of State to succeed the President. Nothing could be more expedient, in any republic, than this practice. It has the advantage of placing at the head of the administration a man experienced in the management of a nation. In entering upon his duties, he is fully prepared and brings with him the advantages of popularity and practical experience. I have borrowed this practice [of succession] and embodied it in the law.

The President of the Republic will appoint the Vice President, who will administer the affairs of the state and succeed the President in office. By means of this device we shall avoid elections, which result in that great scourge of

republics—anarchy, which is the handmaiden of tyranny, the most imminent and terrible peril of popular government. Compare the tremendous crises in republics when a change of rulers takes place with the equivalent situation in legitimate monarchies.

The Vice President must be a man of the loftiest character, for, should the President not appoint an honorable citizen, he will fear him as an enemy incarnate and be ever suspicious of his secret ambitions. The Vice President will have to exert himself in order to merit, through faithful service, the high esteem necessary to discharge the highest duties and to deserve that great national honor—the supreme command. The legislative body and the people will expect both ability and integrity of this high ranking office as well as a blind obedience to the principles of freedom.

If hereditary succession perpetuates the monarchical system and is all but universal, is not the plan which I have just proposed, wherein the Vice President succeeds to the presidency, much more expedient? What if hereditary princes were chosen for merit and not by fate? What if, instead of wallowing in idleness and ignorance, they were put in charge of government administration? They would unquestionably be more enlightened monarchs, and they would contribute to the happiness of their peoples.

The judicial power that I propose enjoys an absolute independence not to be found in any other nation. The people nominate the candidates, and the legislature chooses the persons who are to serve in the courts. Unless the judicial powers emanate from this source, the judiciary cannot possibly be faithful to its obligation to safeguard individual rights. These rights, Legislators, are those that insure freedom, equality, and security—all guarantees of the social order. The real foundation of liberty resides in the civil and criminal codes; and the worst kind of tyranny is that which is exercised by the courts through that powerful instrument, law. As a rule, the executive is the custodian of public affairs, but the courts are the arbiters of private affairs—of the concerns of individuals. The judicial power determines

the happiness or the unhappiness of the citizens. Whatever liberty and justice the Republic enjoys is dispensed by this power. At times, the political structure is of minor importance if the civil organization is perfect, that is, if the laws are rigorously enforced and held to be as inexorable as fate.

The responsibility of government officials is set forth in the Bolivian Constitution in the most explicit terms. Without responsibility and restraint, the nation becomes a chaos. I should like most forcefully to urge upon you, the legislators, the enactment of strict and well-defined laws on this important matter. Everyone speaks of responsibility, but it receives lip service only. When there is no responsibility, Legislators, the judges and all the other officials, high and low, abuse their powers, as there is no rigid check on government servants. The citizens, consequently, are the victims of this abuse. I recommend a law that will provide for an annual check on every government employee.

The most perfect guarantees have been provided for the individual. *Civil liberty* is the one true freedom; the others are nominal, or they affect the citizens slightly. The inviolability of the individual—the true purpose of society and the source of all other safeguards—is guaranteed. *Property rights* will be covered by a civil code, which you should wisely draft in due time for the good of your fellow citizens. I have left intact that law of laws—*equality*. Neglect it, and all rights and safeguards will vanish. We must make every sacrifice for it and, at its feet, cast the dishonored and infamous relics of slavery.

Legislators, slavery is the negation of all law, and any law which should perpetuate it would be a sacrilege. What justification can there be for its perpetuation? Examine this crime from every aspect and tell me if there is a single Bolivian so depraved as to wish to sanctify by law this shameless violation of human dignity. One man owned by another! A man reduced to a chattel! An image of God coupled to the yoke like a beast! Where are the legal claims of the enslavers of men? Guinea did not authorize them, for Africa, devastated by fratricidal struggles, spawned nothing but crime.

Legislators, I shall mention one item which my conscience has compelled me to omit. A political constitution should not prescribe any particular religion, for, according to the best doctrines, fundamental laws guarantee political and civil rights; and, since religion has no bearing upon these rights, it is by nature indefinable in the social organization, because it lies in the moral and intellectual sphere. Religion governs man in his home, within his own walls, within himself. Religion alone is entitled to examine a man's innermost conscience. Laws, on the contrary, deal with surface things; they are applicable outside the home of a citizen. If we apply these criteria, how can a state rule the conscience of its subjects, enforce the observance of religious laws, and mete out rewards and punishments, when the tribunals are in Heaven and God is the judge? Only the Inquisition could presume to do their work on earth. Would you bring back the Inquisition with its burnings at the stake?

Religion is the law of conscience. Any law that imposes it negates it, because to apply compulsion to conscience is to destroy the value of faith, which is the very essence of religion. The sacred precepts and doctrines are useful, enlightening, and spiritually nourishing. We should all avow them, but the obligation is moral rather than political.

On the other hand, what are the religious rights of man on earth? These rights reside in Heaven where there is a tribunal that rewards merit and dispenses justice according to the code laid down by the great Lawgiver. As all this is within divine jurisdiction, it would seem to me, at first sight, to be sacrilegious and profane for us to interfere with the Commandments of the Lord by enactments of our own. Prescribing religion is therefore not the task of the legislator, who, for any infractions, must provide penalties, not mere exhortations. Where there are no temporal punishments or judges to apply them, the law ceases to be law.

The moral development of man is the legislator's first concern. Once such a growth has been attained, man bases his morality upon the truths so revealed and acknowledges religion *de facto* and all the more effectively for having

come to it by personal experience. Moreover, heads of families cannot neglect their religious obligations to their children. The spiritual pastors are obliged to teach the Gospel of Heaven. The example of all the true disciples of Christ is the most eloquent teacher of his divine doctrine. But doctrine cannot be commanded, nor is one who commands a teacher, for force can play no part in the giving of spiritual counsel. God and his ministers are the authorities on religion; and religion exerts its influence solely through spiritual means and bodies, never through instruments of the nation's body politic, which serves only to direct public energies toward purely temporal ends.

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Simón Bolívar

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## The Bolivian Constitution

*Bolívar's draft of a constitution for Bolivia is a document much written about but seldom read, despite the fact that its author regarded it as his crowning contribution to the art of government. Its essential features are, of course, set forth in the address with which he presented it for the consideration of the Bolivian assembly. Nevertheless, there are some points that are better understood by examining the text itself; and the feature that has attracted by far the most attention—the life-term president with power to choose his successor—falls into clearer perspective when one observes how much more there is to the document as a whole. Indeed the Liberator was justified in boasting that his creation had many liberal aspects. It was also rather complicated—even more so than would appear from the slightly abridged version presented here. It should be noted, finally, that Bolívar's draft was not followed in every instance in the first constitution that was formally adopted for Bolivia in November 1826. But the differences were few and were mostly unimportant; two that were not have been indicated in the footnotes.*

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Translated from Lucio Pabón Núñez, *El pensamiento político del Libertador* (2nd ed., Bogotá, [1955]), pp. 113–120, 122–137, 141–143, 145–146.



In the name of God, the General Constituent Congress of the Bolivian Republic, named by the people to form the constitution of the state, decrees the following:

## Title I—Of the Nation

### *Chapter 1—Of the Bolivian Nation*

Article 1. The Bolivian nation is the union of all Bolivians.

Article 2. Bolivia is and will be forever independent of all foreign domination; and cannot be the patrimony of any person or family.

### *Chapter 2—Of the Territory*

Article 3. The territory of the Bolivian Republic comprises the departments of Potosí, Chuquisaca, La Paz, Santacruz, Cochabamba, and Oruro.

Article 4. It is divided into departments, provinces and cantons.

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## Title II—Of the Government<sup>1</sup>

### *Chapter 1—Form of Government*

Article 6. The Government of Bolivia is popular [and] representative.

Article 7. Sovereignty emanates from the people, and its exercise is vested in the powers that this Constitution establishes.

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<sup>1</sup> In the version that was finally adopted, this Title was preceded by a Title consisting of a single article and declaring, "The Catholic, Apostolic, Roman religion is that of the Republic, with exclusion of any other public cult. . . ." This was the most glaring single departure from Bolívar's recommendations, although it should be noted that Bolívar did not, as is sometimes alleged, propose the actual separation of church and state: several articles in his draft provide for state intervention in ecclesiastical appointments and administration, in the manner of the traditional Spanish *patronato* (patronage). For the exact text of the first Bolivian Constitution, see Ciro Félix Trigo, *Las constituciones de Bolivia* (Madrid, 1958), pp. 177-199. [Ed.]

Article 8. The Supreme Power is divided, for its exercise, in four sections: Electoral, Legislative, Executive and Judicial.

*Chapter 2—Of the Bolivians*

Article 10. Bolivians are:

§I. All those born in the territory of the republic.

§II. The children of Bolivian father or mother, born outside the territory, as soon as they legally manifest their intent to reside in Bolivia.

§III. The Liberators of the Republic, declared as such by the Law of August 11, 1825.

§IV. Foreigners who obtain papers of naturalization or have three years of residence in the territory of the republic.

§V. All those who until this day have been slaves and therefore will be, in effect, free as of the publication of this constitution; the indemnification that is to be made to their former owners will be determined by a special law.<sup>2</sup>

Article 11. Duties of every Bolivian are:

§I. To live in submission to the Constitution and laws.

§II. To respect and obey the constituted authorities.

§III. To contribute to the public expenditures.

§IV. To sacrifice his goods and his life itself when the health of the Republic demands it.

§V. To watch over the preservation of public liberties.

Article 12. Bolivians who are deprived of the exercise of the electoral power shall enjoy all the civil rights granted to citizens.

Article 13. To be a citizen it is necessary:

§I. To be a Bolivian.

§II. To be married or more than twenty-one years old.

§III. To know how to read and write.

§IV. To have some employment or industry or to pro-

<sup>2</sup> In the final text, "in effect" was changed to "by law," and the reference to later indemnification was replaced by the words, "but they shall not be able to abandon the home of their former masters, except in the form which a special law shall determine." [Ed.]

fess some science or art, without subjection to another as a domestic servant.

### Title III—Of the Electoral Power

#### *Chapter 1—Of Elections*

Article 19. Active citizens exercise the electoral power directly, naming one elector for every ten citizens.

Article 20. The exercise of the electoral power can never be suspended; and the civil ministers, without waiting for any order, must convoke the people, precisely in the period indicated by law.

#### *Chapter 2—Of the Electoral Body*

Article 22. The electoral body is composed of the electors named by the popular voters.

[Articles 23–25. The electors, meeting in their provincial capitals, shall nominate three citizens, to the respective chamber, for each position to be filled in the legislative power. In similar fashion they shall submit nominations to the executive power for prefect of their department, governor of their province, and corregidores of its cantons and towns; to the prefect for alcaldes and justices of the peace; to the Senate for district court members and judges of first instance; and to the executive power for curates and vicars within their province. They shall also submit petitions and complaints to the legislative chambers.]

### Title IV—Of the Legislative Power

#### *Chapter 1—Of the Division, Attributes, and Restrictions of This Power*

Article 26. The legislative power emanates directly from the electoral bodies named by the people. Its exercise is vested in three chambers: first, of tribunes; second, of senators; third, of censors.

Article 29. The particular attributes of each chamber will be detailed in their place. General attributes are: (1) to name the President of the Republic the first time, and to confirm the successors; (2) to approve the Vice-President, at the proposal of the President; (3) to choose the place in which the government is to reside . . . ; (4) to decide on the impeachment of the members of the chambers, the Vice-President, and the Secretaries of State; (5) to invest the President of the Republic, in time of war or extraordinary danger, with the faculties deemed indispensable for the salvation of the state; (6) to elect, from among the three candidates presented for each position by the electoral bodies, the members who are to fill the vacancies in each chamber. . . .

Article 30. The members of the legislative body may be named Vice-President of the Republic, or Secretaries of State, ceasing to belong to their chamber.

Article 31. No individual of the legislative body may be arrested during his term except by order of his respective chamber unless he is caught in the act of committing a capital crime.

Article 32. The members of the legislative body shall have immunity for the opinions that they express within their chambers in the exercise of their functions.

### *Chapter 2—Of the Chamber of Tribunes*

Article 41. To be a tribune it is necessary:

§I. To be an active citizen.

§II. To be twenty-five years of age.

§III. Never to have been sentenced in a criminal case.

Article 42. The Tribunate has the initiative:

§I. In the regulation of the territorial division of the Republic.

§II. In the annual taxation and public expenditures.

§III. In authorizing the executive power to negotiate loans and adopt means to extinguish the public debt.

§IV. In the value, type, fineness, weight, and denomination of money and in the regulation of weights and measures.

§V. In opening every type of port.

§VI. In the construction of roads, highways, bridges, public buildings, and in the improvement of police and branches of industry.

§VII. In the salaries of state employees.

§VIII. In the reforms that are believed necessary in the management of finance and military affairs.

§IX. In making war or peace, at the proposal of the government.

§X. In alliances.

§XI. In granting passage to foreign troops.

§XII. In [determining the size of] the armed forces of sea and land for the year, at the proposal of the government.

§XIII. In making ordinances for the Navy, Army, and National Militia, at the proposal of the government.

§XIV. In foreign affairs.

§XV. In granting letters of naturalization and citizenship.

§XVI. In granting general amnesties.

Article 43. The Chamber of Tribunes shall be renewed by one-half every two years, and their term shall be four. . . .

Article 44. The tribunes may be reelected.

### *Chapter 3—Of the Chamber of the Senate*

Article 45. To be a senator it is necessary:

§I. To have the qualities required for elector.

§II. To be thirty-five years of age.

§III. Never to have been sentenced in a criminal case.

Article 46. The attributes of the Senate are:

§I. To form the civil, criminal, procedural, and commercial codes and the ecclesiastical regulations.

§II. To initiate all laws relative to reforms in judicial matters.

§III. To watch over the prompt administration of civil and criminal justice.

§IV. The initiative in laws that suppress infractions of the Constitution and laws by magistrates, judges, and ecclesiastics.

§V. To exact responsibility of the superior tribunals of justice, the prefects, and the subordinate magistrates and judges.

§VI. To nominate three candidates, to the Chamber of Censors, for each position on the Supreme Tribunal of Justice and as archbishop, bishop, dignitary, canon, and prebendary of the cathedrals.

§VII. To approve or reject the prefects, governors, and corregidores whom the government presents to it from the nominations made by the electoral bodies.

§VIII. To elect, from the nominees presented by the electoral bodies, the district judges and all the subordinate officials of the Department of Justice.

§IX. To regulate the exercise of the patronage and propose laws on all ecclesiastical matters that concern the government.

§X. To examine conciliar decisions, papal bulls, rescripts, and briefs, in order to approve them or not.

Article 47. The duration of the members of the Senate shall be eight years; and it shall be renewed by one-half each four years. . . .

Article 48. The members of the Senate may be reelected.

#### *Chapter 4—Of the Chamber of Censors*

Article 49. To be a censor it is necessary:

§I. To have the qualities required for senator.

§II. To be forty years old.

§III. Never to have been sentenced, even for minor faults.

Article 50. The attributes of the Chamber of Censors are:

§I. To see that the government fulfills and enforces the constitution, the laws, and public treaties.

§II. To accuse before the Senate the infractions committed by the executive against the constitution, laws, and public treaties.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> If the Senate did not agree that there was a basis for the accusation, then the matter would pass to the Tribunes; and if, finally, two chambers agreed that charges should be pressed, the case would go to the Supreme Tribunal of Justice. [Ed.]

§III. To ask the Senate to suspend the Vice-President and Secretaries of State if the health of the republic urgently demands it.

Article 59. Further attributes corresponding to the Chamber of Censors are:

§I. To choose from among the nominees presented by the Senate the individuals who are to form the Supreme Tribunal of Justice and those who are to be presented for vacant archbishoprics, bishoprics, canonries and prebends.

§II. All laws on printing, the economy, plan of studies, and methods of public instruction.

§III. To protect the freedom of press and name the judges who are to see press cases in final appeal.

§IV. To propose regulations for the encouragement of the arts and sciences.

§V. To grant prizes and national rewards to those who merit them for their services to the republic.

§VI. To decree public honors to the memory of great men and to the virtues and services of citizens.

§VII. To condemn to eternal opprobrium the usurpers of public authority, great traitors, and notorious criminals.

Article 60. The censors shall serve for life.

### *Chapter 5—Of the Formation and Promulgation of Laws*

Article 61. The government may present to the chambers proposals for laws that it judges suitable.

Article 62. The Vice-President and the Secretaries of State may attend the sessions and discuss the laws and other affairs but may not vote or be present at the votings.

[Articles 63–68, 74, 75. A bill first approved by any one chamber shall next be referred to one of the other two, following a sequence set forth in the constitution. If they disagree, the third chamber shall also vote on the measure; but approval by only two is required.]

Article 69. If the President of the Republic should believe that [a] law is not suitable, he must, within ten days, return it to the chamber that originated it, with his observa-

tions and with the following formula: *The executive believes that it should be considered anew.*

Article 71. When the executive power returns the laws with observations to the chambers, the latter shall meet; and what they decide by plurality shall be carried out without further discussion.

## Title V—Of the Executive Power

Article 76. The exercise of the executive power is vested in a President who serves for life, a Vice-President, and three Secretaries of State.

### *Chapter I—Of the President*

Article 77. The President of the Republic shall be named the first time by absolute plurality of the legislative body.

Article 78. To be named President of the Republic it is necessary:

§I. To be an active citizen and native of Bolivia.

§II. To be over thirty years of age.

§III. To have rendered important services to the republic.

§IV. To have known talents in the administration of the state.

§V. Never to have been sentenced by the tribunals, even for minor faults.

Article 79. The President of the Republic is the chief of the administration of the state, without responsibility for the acts of said administration.

Article 80. By resignation, death, sickness, or absence of the President of the Republic, the Vice-President will succeed him immediately.

Article 82. The attributes of the President of the Republic are:

§I. To open the sessions of the chambers and present them a message on the state of the republic.

§II. To nominate the Vice-President to the chambers and to name by himself alone the cabinet secretaries.



§III. To remove by himself alone the Vice-President and the cabinet secretaries, whenever he sees fit.

§IV. To order the laws to be published, circulated, and kept.

§V. To authorize regulations and orders for the better fulfillment of the Constitution, laws, and public treaties.

§VI. To order and cause to be carried out the sentences of the tribunals of justice. . . .

§IX. To dispose of the permanent forces of sea and land for the external defense of the republic.

§X. To command the armies of the republic in person, in peace and war. . . .

§XII. To dispose of the national militia for internal security within the limits of their departments and outside of them, with the consent of the legislative body.

§XIII. To name all the employees of the Army and Navy.

§XIV. To establish military schools and nautical schools.

§XV. To order the establishment of military hospitals and homes for invalids.

§XVI. To give leaves of absence and retirements, grant pensions to the military and their families in accordance with the laws. . . .

§XVII. To declare war in the name of the republic, following the decree of the legislative body.

§XVIII. To grant patents of privateering.

§XIX. To attend to the collection and investment of taxes, in conformity with the laws.

§XX. To name financial employees.

§XXI. To direct diplomatic negotiations and enter into treaties of peace, friendship, federation, alliance, truces, armed neutrality, commerce, and of any other kind, always with the approval of the legislative body.

§XXII. To name the ministers, consuls, and subordinates of the Department of Foreign Relations.

§XXIII. To receive foreign ministers.

§XXIV. To grant approval to or suspend conciliar decisions, pontifical bulls, briefs, and rescripts with the consent of the power concerned.

§XXV. To nominate to the Senate, for its approval, one of the three candidates proposed by the electoral body for prefects, governors, and corregidores.

§XXVI. To nominate to the ecclesiastical authority one of the three candidates proposed by the electoral body for curates and vicars of the provinces.

§XXVII. To suspend employees for up to three months, whenever there is cause to do so.

§XXVIII. To commute capital sentences imposed on criminals by the tribunals.

§XXIX. To issue the titles or appointments of all employees in the name of the republic.

Article 83. Restrictions on the President of the Republic are:

§I. The President may not deprive any Bolivian of his freedom, nor impose any penalty by himself.

§II. When the security of the republic demands the arrest of one or more citizens, he must, within forty-eight hours, place the accused at the disposition of the competent tribunal or judge.

§III. He may not deprive any individual of his property unless the public interest urgently demands it; but just compensation to the owner must first be made.

§IV. He may not prevent the elections or other functions that by law correspond to the powers of the republic.

§V. He may not absent himself from the territory of the republic, nor from the capital, without permission of the legislative body.

## *Chapter 2—Of the Vice-President*

Article 84. The Vice-President is named by the President of the Republic and approved by the legislative body. . . .

Article 86. To be Vice-President the same qualities are required as for President.

Article 87. The Vice-President of the Republic is the chief of the ministry.

Article 88. He shall be responsible, with the cabinet secretary of the respective department, for the administration of the state.

Article 89. He shall despatch and sign, in the name of the republic and of the President, all the business of the administration, with the Secretary of State of the respective department.

Article 90. He may not absent himself from the territory of the republic, nor from the capital, without permission of the legislative body.

### *Chapter 3—Of the Secretaries of State*

Article 91. There shall be three cabinet secretaries: One will be in charge of the Departments of Government and Foreign Relations; the other of that of Finance, and the other of that of War and Navy.

Article 92. These three secretaries shall serve under the immediate orders of the Vice-President.

Article 93. No tribunal or public person shall carry out orders of the executive that are not signed by the Vice-President and cabinet secretary of [the respective] department.

Article 94. The cabinet secretaries shall be responsible with the Vice-President for all the orders that they authorize against the Constitution, laws, or public treaties.

Article 95. They shall form the annual budgets of expenditures that must be made in their respective branches and will render account of those that have been made in the previous year.

Article 96. To be Secretary of State it is necessary:

§I. To be an active citizen.

§II. To be thirty years old.

§III. Never to have been sentenced in a criminal case.

## **Title VI—Of the Judicial Power**

### *Chapter 1—Attributes of This Power*

Article 97. The tribunals and courts exercise no other functions than that of applying existing laws.

Article 98. The magistrates and judges shall last [in office] as long as their good behavior.

Article 99. The magistrates and judges may not be suspended from their positions except in the cases determined by the laws. . . .

Article 100. Every grave fault of the magistrates and judges in the performance of their respective offices produces popular action, which may be undertaken within the course of one year through the electoral body.<sup>4</sup>

### *Chapter 5—Of the Administration of Justice*

Article 116. The *recurso de injusticia notoria*<sup>5</sup> is abolished.

Article 117. No Bolivian may be arrested without previous information of the act for which he merits a corporal penalty and a written order of the judge before whom he is to be presented. . . .

Article 118. In the same act, if it is possible, he shall give his declaration without oath, this being delayed in no case for longer than forty-eight hours.

Article 119. Every criminal may be arrested *in flagrante* by any person and brought to the presence of the judge.

Article 120. In criminal cases judgment shall be public, the facts determined and declared by juries (when they are established), and the law applied by the judges.

Article 121. Torture shall never be used, nor shall confession be demanded.

Article 122. All confiscation of property and any kind of cruel punishment and hereditary infamy are abolished. The criminal code shall limit, so far as possible, the application of capital punishment.

Article 123. If in extraordinary circumstances the security of the republic should demand the suspension of any of the formalities prescribed in this chapter, the chambers may decree it. And if the latter should be not in session, the

<sup>4</sup> This "popular action," presumably, was to involve the special functions of petition and complaint assigned to the provincial electoral assemblies. [Ed.]

<sup>5</sup> In traditional Spanish jurisprudence, this was a form of appeal allowed outside normal judicial channels against a "final" court decision—i.e., against a decision that was handed down after all the established channels of appeal had been exhausted. One of the principal criticisms of the procedure was that it reflected on the integrity and competence of the judiciary and in effect invited executive interference in judicial matters. [Ed.]

executive may perform this same function, as a provisional measure. . . .

## Title VII—Of the Internal Organization of the Republic

Article 124. The superior government of each department shall be vested in a prefect.

Article 125. That of each province, in a governor.

Article 126. That of the cantons, in a corregidor.

Article 127. In each town whose inhabitants are not less than one hundred souls, by themselves or in its district, there shall be a justice of the peace.

Article 128. Where the inhabitants in the town or in its district exceed one thousand souls, there shall be (in addition to one justice of the peace for every two hundred) an alcalde; and where the number of souls exceeds one thousand, there shall be for every five hundred a justice of the peace and for every two thousand an alcalde.<sup>6</sup>

Article 129. The positions of alcaldes and justices of the peace are obligatory, and no citizen, without just cause, may be excused from performing them.

\*   \*   \*

## Title VIII—Of the Armed Force

Article 134. There shall be in the republic a permanent armed force.

Article 135. The armed force shall be composed of an army of the line and a squadron.

Article 136. There shall be, in each province, bodies of national militia composed of the inhabitants of each one of them.

Article 137. There shall also be a military guard, whose principal function shall be to prevent all clandestine trade.

\*   \*   \*

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<sup>6</sup> This article, which appears to reflect some careless draftsmanship on Bolívar's part, was substantially altered in the final version. The number of justices of the peace was reduced, and alcaldes were eliminated entirely. [Ed.]

## Title X—Of Guarantees

Article 144. Civil liberty, individual security, property, and equality before the law are guaranteed to the citizens by the Constitution.

Article 145. All may communicate their thoughts by word or in writing, and publish them by means of the press, without prior censorship; but under the responsibility that the law determines.

Article 146. Every Bolivian may remain in or leave the territory of the republic, as he sees fit, taking his property with him but observing police regulations and provided, always, the right of third parties is respected.

Article 147. Every home of a Bolivian is an inviolable asylum. By night no one may enter it, except with his consent; by day entrance shall be allowed only in the cases and the manner that the law determines.

Article 148. Taxes shall be distributed proportionately without any exception or privilege.

Article 149. Hereditary offices and privileges and entails are abolished; and all properties are alienable, even though they belong to pious works, religious communities, or other objectives.

Article 150. No type of work, industry, or commerce may be prohibited, unless it is opposed to public customs, the security, and the health of Bolivians.

Article 151. Every inventor shall have ownership of his discovery and of his productions. The law shall assure him a temporary exclusive privilege or indemnification for the loss he suffers in case of its being made public.

Article 152. The constitutional powers may not suspend the Constitution, nor the rights which correspond to Bolivians, except in the cases and circumstances expressed in the Constitution itself, indicating without fail the period that the suspension is to last.

## Some Lesser Bolivarian Texts

*The documents that follow are in no sense a representative cross section of the vast body of correspondence, orders, and proclamations written by or at the behest of Bolívar. However, each one deserves inclusion either because of the notoriety it enjoys in its own right (as in the case of the first entry) or because it is illustrative of a major theme treated elsewhere in this volume (as in the case of the second).*

### A

#### The Decree of War to the Death

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*Possibly no one act of the Liberator has provoked so much controversy as his proclamation of war to the death in June 1813. Even many of his admirers have condemned it as unnecessarily brutal, while defenders of the measure uniformly emphasize that execution of prisoners was first practiced on a significant scale by the royalists. But there were instances of "war to the death" on both sides of the struggle even before Bolí-*

*var's proclamation, and not all Spanish prisoners who fell into patriot hands were executed even after it. In any case, the measure graphically reflects the type of warfare that ravaged Venezuela for much of the independence period.*

SIMON BOLIVAR, Liberator of Venezuela, Brigadier of the Union, General in Chief of the Northern Army

*To his fellow countrymen:*

*Venezuelans:* An army of your brothers, sent by the Sovereign Congress of New Granada, has come to liberate you. Having expelled the oppressors from the provinces of Mérida and Trujillo, it is now among you.

We are sent to destroy the Spaniards, to protect the Americans, and to reestablish the republican governments that once formed the Confederation of Venezuela. The states defended by our arms are again governed by their former constitutions and tribunals, in full enjoyment of their liberty and independence, for our mission is designed only to break the chains of servitude that still shackle some of our towns and not to impose laws or exercise acts of dominion to which the rules of war may entitle us.

Moved by your misfortunes, we have been unable to observe with indifference the afflictions you were forced to experience by the barbarous Spaniards, who have ravished you, plundered you, and brought you death and destruction. They have violated the sacred rights of nations. They have broken the most solemn agreements and treaties. In fact, they have committed every manner of crime, reducing the republic of Venezuela to the most frightful desolation. Justice therefore demands vengeance, and necessity compels us to exact it. Let the monsters who infest Colombian soil, who have drenched it in blood, be cast out forever; may their punishment be equal to the enormity of their perfidy, so that we may eradicate the stain of our ignominy and demonstrate to the nations of the world that the sons of America cannot be offended with impunity.

Despite our just resentment toward the iniquitous Spaniards, our magnanimous heart still commands us to open to



them for the last time a path to reconciliation and friendship; they are invited to live peacefully among us, if they will abjure their crimes, honestly change their ways, and cooperate with us in destroying the intruding Spanish government and in the reestablishment of the republic of Venezuela.

Any Spaniard who does not, by every active and effective means, work against tyranny in behalf of this just cause, will be considered an enemy and punished; as a traitor to the nation, he will inevitably be shot by a firing squad. On the other hand, a general and absolute amnesty is granted to those who come over to our army with or without their arms, as well as to those who render aid to the good citizens who are endeavoring to throw off the yoke of tyranny. Army officers and civil magistrates who proclaim the government of Venezuela and join with us shall retain their posts and positions; in a word, those Spaniards who render outstanding service to the state shall be regarded and treated as Americans.

And you Americans who, by error or treachery, have been lured from the paths of justice, are informed that your brothers, deeply regretting the error of your ways, have pardoned you as we are profoundly convinced that you cannot be truly to blame, for only the blindness and ignorance in which you have been kept up to now by those responsible for your crimes could have induced you to commit them. Fear not the sword that comes to avenge you and to sever the ignoble ties with which your executioners have bound you to their own fate. You are hereby assured, with absolute impunity, of your honor, lives, and property. The single title, "Americans," shall be your safeguard and guarantee. Our arms have come to protect you; and they shall never be raised against a single one of you, our brothers.

This amnesty is extended even to the very traitors who most recently have committed felonious acts; and it shall be so religiously applied that no reason, cause, or pretext will be sufficient to oblige us to violate our offer, however extraordinary and extreme the occasion you may give to provoke our wrath.

Spaniards and Canary Islanders, you will die, though you be neutral, unless you actively espouse the cause of America's liberation. Americans, you will live, even if you have trespassed.

General Headquarters, Trujillo, June 15, 1813. The 3d [year].

Simón Bolívar



## A Decree for the Emancipation of Slaves

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*This decree, issued during an ill-fated descent on the Venezuelan coast in 1816, is one of a series of measures taken by Bolívar against slavery in the course of the struggle. In its broader scope, it (and certain others like it) remained largely a dead letter, although able-bodied slaves who in fact joined the patriot armies did obtain their freedom. For the slave population as a whole, the first measure to attain general observance was the manumission law passed by the Congress of Cúcuta in 1821, and the only slaves it freed outright were those born after its adoption. Even they had to work for their parents' masters until the age of eighteen to repay the cost of their early upbringing.*

SIMON BOLIVAR, Supreme Chief, and Captain General of the Armies of Venezuela and New Granada, etc., etc. *To the inhabitants of Río Caribe, Carúpano, and Cariaco. Greeting.*

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Translated from Sociedad Bolivariana de Venezuela, *Decretos del Libertador* (3 vols., Caracas, 1961), I, 55-56.

Considering that justice, policy, and the fatherland imperiously demand the inalienable rights of nature, I have resolved to decree, as I do decree, the absolute liberty of the slaves who have groaned beneath the Spanish yoke in the past three centuries. Considering that the republic needs the services of all its sons, we have to impose on the new citizens the following conditions:

Article 1.—Every robust man, from the age of fourteen to sixty years, shall present himself in the parish of his district to enlist under the banners of Venezuela, twenty-four hours after the present decree has been published.

Article 2.—The aged, women, children, and disabled shall be exempted forever from military service; as likewise from the domestic and field service in which they were employed before for the benefit of their masters.

Article 3.—The new citizen who refuses to take arms to fulfill the sacred duty of defending his liberty shall be subject to servitude, not only he, but also his children of less than fourteen years, his wife, and his aged parents.

Article 4.—The relatives of the soldiers employed in the liberating army shall enjoy the rights of citizens and the absolute liberty that this decree grants them in the name of the republic of Venezuela.

The present regulation shall have the force of law and shall be faithfully carried out by the republican authorities of Río Caribe, Carúpano, and Cariaco.

Given in the General Headquarters of Carúpano, the 2nd of June of 1816.

Simón Bolívar



## The Military Bonus Law of 1817

Bolívar's "law" of October 1817—really a decree—that promised a bonus in national property to the soldiers of patriot armies is clearly one of the key documents of social and economic history of the independence period. Subsequent measures confirmed, amended, or interpreted the original offer, but the bonus was always intended primarily for those men who had fought in the dark years between the Spanish reconquest and the final liberation of New Granada; it was never automatically extended to all patriot soldiers, and complications often arose in determining exactly who was eligible. Even those whose eligibility was unquestioned did not always receive much concrete benefit; and those who profited most were naturally the higher-ranking officers, who had larger shares assigned to them in the first place and a higher probability of actually obtaining what they were assigned. Thus while the bonus system was intended to lift the morale and quiet the discontent of soldiers and veterans, and to some extent did achieve this purpose, there are also cases in which it appears to have had the opposite effect simply by raising hopes that were not satisfied. All things considered, the bonus was both a means whereby a great amount of property changed hands and an almost continual source of controversy during the brief existence of Gran Colombia. In recent years, with the growth of interest in social and economic history, it has been made much of and has been the subject of several new interpretations (cf. Document 21); but its objectives, application, and results still have not received the detailed examination they deserve.

SIMON BOLIVAR, Supreme Chief of the Republic, Captain General of the Armies of Venezuela and New Granada:

Considering that the first duty of the government is to recompense the services of the virtuous defenders of the republic, who generously sacrificing their lives and properties for the liberty and happiness of the fatherland have sustained and do sustain the disastrous war of independence, without either themselves or their families having the means of subsistence; and considering that there exist in the territory occupied by the arms of the republic, and in that which we are going to liberate, possessed today by the enemy, a multitude of properties of Spaniards and American royalists that according to the decree and regulation published on September 3 of the present year are to be sequestered and confiscated, I have resolved to decree, and do decree, the following:

Article 1. All real and immovable properties that in accordance with the cited decree and regulation have been sequestered and confiscated, or are to be sequestered and confiscated, and have not been alienated nor can be alienated for the benefit of the national treasury, shall be distributed and adjudicated to the generals, chiefs,<sup>1</sup> officers, and soldiers of the republic, on the terms that will be expressed below.

Article 2. The ranks obtained on campaign being an incontestable proof of the different services performed by each one of the individuals of the army, the distribution of properties of which the preceding article speaks shall be made in accordance with them, to wit:

To a general in chief	\$25,000
To a general of division	20,000
To a brigadier general	15,000
To a colonel	10,000

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<sup>1</sup> The Spanish term *jefes* in this sense refers to officers between the ranks of captain and general. [Ed.]

To a lieutenant colonel	9,000
To a major	8,000
To a captain	6,000
To a lieutenant	4,000
To a second lieutenant [ <i>subteniente</i> ]	3,000
To a first and second sergeant	1,000
To a first and second corporal	700
And to a soldier	500

Article 3. The officers, sergeants, corporals, and soldiers who obtain promotions subsequent to the distribution shall have the right to claim the difference that there is between the quantity they received when they held the previous position and that which corresponds to them for the one that was last conferred on them and that they hold at the time of the last distribution.

Article 4. If, when the computation of the value of the properties available for distribution is made, this is not sufficient to cover all the shares, the government offers to make up the lack with any other national properties and principally with concessions of unoccupied lands [*terrenos baldíos*].

Article 5. If, before or after the properties are distributed, the government should see fit to reward the valor, service, or very distinguished action of a military man, it may do so by ceding him any of said properties without being obliged in this case to consider the rank of the beneficiary or the quantity that is granted him.

Article 6. In the case of a military man who has merited and attained the reward of which the preceding article speaks, he shall not have the right to claim the share that the second article assigns him, if the value of the property that has been granted to him is greater than that which is indicated for his rank.

Article 7. When the properties for distribution are of a value greater than the quantities assigned to the different ranks, the government shall take care that the allotments are made in the way that is most suited to the interests of

all, for which purpose many can associate or join together and request that they be granted such an estate.<sup>2</sup>

Article 8. The distribution will be made by a special commission, which will be opportunely named and will be governed for that purpose by the regulation that will be published.

Article 9. The government reserves to itself the immediate direction of this commission.

To be published, communicated to whom it may concern, and a copy sent to the general staff so that it may be inserted in the order of the day, which shall be made to circulate through all the divisions and corps of the army of the republic for their satisfaction.

Given, signed with my hand, sealed with the provisional seal of the republic, and countersigned by the undersigned secretary of the supreme government at the headquarters of Santo Tomás de la Nueva Guayana on October 10, 1817.  
7<sup>th</sup> [year].

Simón Bolívar

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<sup>2</sup> Although there is nothing in this measure to prohibit the splitting up of larger properties for distribution to a number of claimants, the obvious intent was for them to be given intact either to one individual or to a group of associates. Division would often have been uneconomic, especially in grazing country, but the procedure adopted put small bonus claimants at a disadvantage. No really adequate solution was ever worked out. [Ed.]



## The Bolivarian Version of the Guayaquil Interview

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*The private meeting of Bolívar and San Martín at Guayaquil has given rise to a debate between historians, from the two ends of South America, that shows no sign of ending. Most Argentine historians have based their version of what happened on a letter, purportedly written by San Martín (Document 16), which their Venezuelan counterparts label a fabrication. The Venezuelans cite principally two reports signed by Bolívar's secretary, José Gabriel Pérez, whose data came directly from the Liberator. One of the two, addressed to Antonio José de Sucre who was then serving at Quito, is printed below; the other, addressed to the Colombian Secretary of Foreign Relations, Pedro Gual, presents essentially the same account but at greater length. Whereas the letter attributed to San Martín suggests that the Argentinian came primarily to plead for military cooperation against the Spaniards in Peru, the reports inspired by Bolívar refer mainly to political discussions and imply that San Martín was not greatly interested in military aid. It is possible, of course, that Bolívar intentionally minimized the latter aspect; but at least there has never been any question as to the authenticity of the Bolivarian reports.*

General Headquarters, Guayaquil, July 29, 1822.

MY DEAR GENERAL:

I have the honor of informing you that on the 26th, at nine o'clock in the morning, His Excellency the Protector of Peru entered this city.

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Reprinted from Lecuna and Bierck, *Selected Writings of Bolívar*, I, 340-343, with permission of the Banco de Venezuela.



No sooner did the Protector see His Excellency the Liberator aboard the ship that had brought him than he expressed in the most cordial terms the sentiments that had heightened his desire to meet the Liberator, to embrace him, and to assure him of his true and lasting friendship. He congratulated His Excellency on his remarkable perseverance amidst the adversities that he had met with in defense of the cause of freedom and on the victory which had crowned his heroic achievements. Altogether, the Protector protested his friendship for His Excellency in terms of high eulogy and lavish praise.

His Excellency replied in the noble and gracious terms that propriety and gratitude demand in such circumstances.

The Protector opened the conferences in a most frank manner. The principal topics were as follows:

The situation recently experienced in this province, because of the ferment of political opinions, was discussed. Of his own accord the Protector told His Excellency that he had not interfered in the tangled affairs of Guayaquil, that he had not the slightest part in them, and that the fault was theirs, meaning the opposition. His Excellency replied that his desire to consult that city had been realized, for on the 28th the electors would meet, and that he was counting upon the will of the people and a plurality of votes in the assembly. The Protector thereupon changed the subject and went on to talk of military matters and of the expedition which is about to depart [for Peru].

The Protector complained a great deal about his command and, above all, about his comrades-in-arms who had recently abandoned him in Lima. He asserted that he was going to retire to Mendoza, that he had left a sealed note to be presented to the Congress, renouncing the Protectorate, that he would also refuse the election which he expected to win, and that, as soon as he had won the first victory, he would give up his military command and not await the war's end. But, he added, before retiring he would give thought to laying the foundations of the [Peruvian] government. He stated that this government should not be democratic, as democracy did not suit Peru; and lastly he said that an independent, unattached prince should be

brought from Europe to rule Peru. His Excellency replied that to invite European princes would please neither America nor Colombia, as they were extraneous to our people, and that for his part His Excellency would oppose them if he were able, yet without interfering in whatever form of government any country might desire. His Excellency set forth all his ideas on the nature of governments, repeating all that he had said in his speech to the Congress of Angostura. The Protector replied that the securing of a prince was a matter for the future.

It can be assumed that his plan is to erect a monarchy by offering the crown to several European princes and finally to grant the throne to the one receiving the most popular support or having the strongest force to offer. If the Protector is sincere in what he says, no one is further than he from occupying such a throne. He appears to be convinced of the difficulties inherent in leadership.

The Protector applauded highly the federation of the American states as being the very foundation of our political existence. He regards Guayaquil as the most suitable place for the headquarters of such a federation. He believes Chile will have no objections to joining it, but that Buenos Aires, because of the lack of unity and method in that country, will refuse. He said that nothing was closer to his heart than to have the federation between Colombia and Peru continue, even in the absence of other states.

The Protector believes the enemy is weaker than he and that the enemy's leaders, though daring and able, are not to be greatly feared. He will immediately open his campaign with a maritime expedition to Intermedios and from Lima, defending that capital by a frontal march on the enemy.

In their very first talks, the Protector, of his own accord, told His Excellency that the matter of boundaries between Colombia and Peru would be settled satisfactorily and without the slightest difficulty. He would undertake to sponsor it in the Congress, where he did not lack friends.

The Protector told His Excellency that he might ask anything he wished of Peru, as his answer would never be anything but yes, yes, yes; and that he hoped that Colombia would reciprocate. This offer of services and friendship is

without qualification, and it displays a frankness and a sense of satisfaction that appear to be sincere. The Protector's visit to Colombia was not official in character; it was merely a visit to His Excellency the Liberator for no ulterior purpose, political or military. He did not so much as refer to the troops that Colombia is about to send to Peru.

Early yesterday morning the Protector departed. On taking leave, he displayed the same cordiality, affection, and sincerity toward His Excellency as at their first meeting.

The *Vencedor en Boyacá* and the *Pichincha* battalions embarked yesterday for Peru. The *Yaguachi* battalion had left earlier for the same destination. These three battalions number approximately 1,800 men, which, with the 800 of the *Voltijeros de la Guardia*, formerly known as the *Numanzia*, make up Colombia's auxiliary division in Peru.

His Excellency has ordered the *Dragones del Sur* regiment, under Colonel Cestari, to this city, which order has already been communicated to the Colonel.

God keep you many years.

J. G. Pérez

Addendum: Tomorrow the electoral junta of this province will meet and formally decide by popular vote for the province to incorporate with Colombia. There will probably be not a single vote in opposition, and then everything here will pursue the normal course it should follow at all times under our constitutional system. *Vale. Pérez*



## Critique of Olmedo's "La victoria de Junín"

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*One of the more interesting items in Bolívar's collected correspondence is his letter of July 12, 1825, written from Cuzco to the Ecuadorian patriot and poet José Joaquín Olmedo. The letter is a commentary on Olmedo's heroic poem "La victoria de Junín: canto a Bolívar." As such, it illustrates how the Liberator could deal in ancient and modern literary allusions and rules of literary criticism with much the same facility that he brought to the discussion of war and politics. He could not claim to be an expert in the literary field, but his judgments did, in general, reflect both wide information and good taste. At the same time, the letter to Olmedo provides a pleasing illustration of the lighter touch that so often marked Bolívar's private correspondence regardless of the subject. (For some other comments on the same poem, see Bolívar's earlier note to Olmedo of June 27, 1825, which is likewise included in Lecuna and Bierck, *Selected Writings of Bolívar*).*

### MY DEAR FRIEND:

The day before yesterday I received your letter of May 15, which I can only term extraordinary, for, without my knowledge and without asking my consent, you have taken the liberty of making a poet out of me. As every poet is obstinate, you have persisted in imputing to me your tastes and talents. Since you have paid your money and taken your choice, I shall do as did the peasant in the play, who, on being made king, said: "Now that I am King, I shall dispense justice." You must not complain, therefore, of my

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judgments, for, as I am not trained for the office, I shall blindly imitate the king in the comedy, who sent to prison everyone he could lay his hands on. But now to our subject.

I have heard it said that one Horace wrote a very sharp letter to the Pisos in which he harshly criticized metrical compositions. His imitator, M. Boileau, has taught me a few precepts whereby a less informed man can cut to pieces anyone who speaks very prudently in a melodic and rhythmic tone.

I shall start by violating the rules of rhetoric, as I do not like to begin by praising only to end by criticizing. I shall leave my panegyrics for the end of this effort where, in my opinion, they properly belong. You should prepare yourself to hear profound truths, or rather prosaic truths, for you of course know that a poet measures truth by standards that differ from those that guide us men of prose. I shall only follow my masters.

You should have stricken out many verses that I find dull and commonplace. Either I have no ear for music, or they are—they are mere oratory. Forgive my boldness, but as you have dedicated this poem to me I can do with it as I see fit.

Next, you should have allowed your ode to stand in order to ferment like wine; it could then be drawn cold, and sipped and savored. Haste is a grievous sin in a poet. Racine would have devoted two years to the composing of fewer verses, for which reason he is the purest versifier of modern times. The plan of your poem, though essentially good, has a capital defect in its design.

You have prepared too small a frame in which to place a giant who takes up the whole picture and whose very shadow blots out the other characters. The Inca Huaina-Capac appears to be the theme of the poem: his is the genius and gist of it: he, in brief, is its hero. On the other hand, it hardly seems proper for him to praise indirectly the religion that destroyed him, and it appears even less proper that he does not desire the reestablishment of his throne, but, instead, gives preference to foreign intruders who, although they are the avengers of his blood, are nonetheless the descendants of the destroyers of his empire. Such disin-

terestedness is not human. Nature must govern all rules of behavior, and this is contrary to Nature. You will also permit me to observe that this Inca spirit, who should be lighter than air since he comes from Heaven, has too much to say and his part is too involved; that is why the poets have never forgiven *le bon Henri* for his harangue against Queen Isabelle. Hence, you see that, although Voltaire had some claim to indulgence, even he did not escape criticism.

The introduction to the ode is bombastic. It is a thunderbolt of Jupiter that splits the earth and deafens the Andes, which must bear it without a performance like that of Junín. In praising the modesty with which Homer begins his divine *Iliad*, Boileau gave us a precept: He promises little and does much. *Los valles y la sierra proclaman a la tierra*—its onomatopoeia is without appeal. And *los soldados proclaman al general*. Indeed, are the valleys and the mountains the most humble servants of the earth?

Line 360 has overtones of prose—I may be mistaken, but, if I am, why did you make me King?

Let us, to avoid dispute, cite for example line 720:<sup>1</sup>

*Que al Magdalena y al Rimac bullicioso. . . .*

And this other, 750:

*Del triunfo que prepara glorioso. . . .*

And there are others that I refrain from quoting in order not to appear too harsh and ungrateful toward my poet laureate.

"The tower of St. Paul becomes your Pindo, and the mighty Thames becomes the Helicon;" here your ode grows dull, and, if you will consult the shades of Milton, you can deftly apply his demons to us. There are other eminent poets from whom you could derive greater inspiration than that to be found in the Inca [Huaina-Capac], who in truth could sing nothing but the *yaravís*. Pope, the poet of your school, could teach you how to avoid pitfalls that Homer himself could not escape. You will pardon me for taking

<sup>1</sup> These remarks refer to the first edition of the ode, in which there are many errors (note of compiler, Vicente Lecuna).

refuge in Horace as I pronounce my oracles. That critic was indignant that the author of the *Iliad* had ever nodded, and you well know that Virgil regretted having brought forth so divine a daughter as the *Aeneid* even after she had been some nine or ten years in the making. Thus, my friend, you must file and file again to polish up the works of man. I have struck land; hence, I end my critique, or, rather, my blind efforts.

I humbly confess to you that I find the versification of your poem sublime. A spirit seems to have borne you to celestial heights. Throughout most of the ode you preserve a life-giving, refreshing warmth. Some of the inspired passages are highly original. The thoughts are noble and high-minded. Your hero's lending of a bolt to Sucre is superior to Achilles' giving of his arms to Patroclus. Line 130 is most beautiful: "I hear the whirlwinds rage and see the sparks fly"<sup>2</sup>—it is truly Hellenic, Homeric. In the portrayal of Bolívar at Junín we see, as in profile, the moment that precedes the combat between Turnus and Aeneas. The role you give Sucre is warlike and grand. And when you speak of La Mar<sup>3</sup> you remind me of Homer singing of his friend Mentor; though the characters differ, the case is similar—but then, is not La Mar a Mentor in arms?

Permit me to ask, dear friend, where you found the inspiration with which to create an ode so well sustained from the beginning to the end? In the end the battle brings victory, and it is you who have won the battle because you close your poem with dulcet verses, elevated thoughts, and philosophic concepts. You return to the Pindaric vein, and it is so much to my liking that I could call it divine.

Pursue, my beloved poet, the happy course upon which the Muses have launched you with your translation of Pope and your *Ode to Bolívar*.

Pardon, pardon, my friend, but you are to blame for calling me a poet.

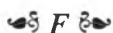
Your devoted friend,

Simón Bolívar

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<sup>2</sup> *Oigo rodar los torbellinos y veo arder los ejes.*

<sup>3</sup> José La Mar, a Peruvian general (born in Guayaquil) of the independence period. [Ed.]



## Views on the Congress of Panama

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*The document that follows is a draft written early in 1826, in which Bolívar set down his thoughts on the Panama Congress that was due to convene later the same year. It clearly reflects both the high hopes that he originally had for the success of the meeting and his strong belief in the desirability of close ties with Great Britain (a belief that forms a persistent theme in Bolívar's thought despite occasional expressions of concern over the extent of British power).*

The Congress of Panama will bring together all the representatives of America and a diplomat-agent of His Britannic Majesty's government. This Congress seems destined to form a league more extensive, more remarkable, and more powerful than any that has ever existed on the face of the earth. Should Great Britain agree to join it as a constituent member, the Holy Alliance will be less powerful than this confederation. Mankind will a thousand times bless this league for promoting its general welfare, and America, as well as Great Britain, will reap from it untold benefits. A code of public law to regulate the international conduct of political bodies will be one of its products.

1. The New World would consist of independent nations, bound together by a common set of laws which would govern their foreign relations and afford them a right to survival through a general and permanent congress.
2. The existence of these new states would receive fresh guarantees.
3. In deference to England, Spain would make peace, and the Holy Alliance would grant recognition to these infant nations.

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Reprinted from Lecuna and Bierck, *Selected Writings of Bolívar*, II, 561-562, with permission of the Banco de Venezuela.



4. Domestic control would be preserved untouched among the states and within each of them.
5. No one of them would be weaker than another, nor would any be stronger.
6. A perfect balance would be established by this truly new order of things.
7. The power of all would come to the aid of any one state which might suffer at the hands of a foreign enemy or from internal anarchic factions.
8. Differences of origin and color would lose their influence and power.
9. America would have nothing more to fear from that tremendous monster who has devoured the island of Santo Domingo,<sup>1</sup> nor would she have cause to fear the numerical preponderance of the aborigines.
10. In short, a social reform would be achieved under the blessed auspices of freedom and peace, but the fulcrum controlling the beam of the scales must necessarily rest in the hands of England.

Great Britain would, of course, derive considerable advantage from this arrangement.

1. Her influence in Europe would progressively increase, and her decisions would be like those of destiny itself.
2. America would serve her as an opulent domain of commerce.
3. America would become the center of England's relations with Asia and Europe.
4. British subjects in America would be considered the equals of American citizens.
5. The relations between England and America would in time become those between equals.

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<sup>1</sup> Bolívar's reference is to the specter of Haitian-style slave insurrection and race war. Along with his ideological commitment to the abolition of slavery and to legal equality of the races, Bolívar—like other creole leaders—had often expressed deep alarm over the possibility that Spanish Americans of African or part-African descent might seek to imitate the Haitian example. [Ed.]

6. British characteristics and customs would be adopted by the Americans as standards for their future way of life.

7. In the course of the centuries, there might, perhaps, come to exist one single nation throughout the world—a federal nation.

These ideas are in the minds of many Americans in positions of importance who impatiently await the inauguration of this project at the Congress of Panama, which may afford the occasion to consummate the union of the new states and the British Empire.

Simón Bolívar



## Circular of 1828 on Educational Reform

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*Perhaps no single measure exemplifies the spirit of the final Bolivarian dictatorship so well as the circular issued in October 1828 by Bolívar's Secretary of the Interior, José Manuel Restrepo, prescribing changes in the system of higher education. It seeks to reverse the educational policy of the liberal Santander regime (carried out with the collaboration of the same Secretary Restrepo), which had consisted of exposing the young to the most advanced thinkers of Western Eu-*

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Translated from Colombia, *Codificación Nacional de las leyes de Colombia desde el año de 1821* (Bogotá, 1924— ), III, 426–428, except for one missing line that has been taken from an alternate version of the same circular appearing in Lucio Pabón Núñez, *El pensamiento político del Libertador* (2nd ed., Bogotá [1955]), p. 207.

rope, without much regard to considerations of religious orthodoxy. At the same time, it represents an effort to attain social and political stability through the inculcation of traditional religious values, in line with the strong proclerical policy that Bolívar had now adopted. The one heterodox thinker singled out by name—Santander's special favorite, Jeremy Bentham, the English philosopher of utilitarianism—had already been banned before this, but the reform was made more sweeping in the reaction that followed the attempt of September 1828 on Bolívar's life.

It is perhaps worth noting that the circular's tone of alarm and indignation over the activities of university students has an obvious contemporary ring. Student activism and university unrest are not new phenomena in Latin America, and the attempts to deal with them by purging faculties and manipulating the curriculum also have a long—and generally unproductive—history. However, the present document does not really do justice to the educational policy of Bolívar himself. It may well be, as revisionist historians have recently claimed, that the influence exercised upon the young Bolívar by his tutor Simón Rodríguez—a disciple of Rousseau and admirer of Rousseau's educational treatise *Émile*—has been somewhat exaggerated. But it presumably should not be dismissed entirely; and later, as a mature statesman, Bolívar like Santander thought highly of Bentham, even if he was less ardent in his enthusiasm. He likewise became a strong promoter of popular education by means of the Lancasterian system of "mutual instruction" imported from England. The traditionalist reaction represented by the October 1828 circular was a development only of his declining years; and it was a response to a frustrating political situation more than a true expression of educational philosophy on Bolívar's part.

[*Despacho*] of the Interior. Bogotá, October 20, 1828.  
To the intendant of the department of . . .<sup>1</sup>

The scandalous events that took place in this capital, as a consequence of the conspiracy that broke out last September 25, the part that unfortunately some young students of the university had in them, and the clamor of many honorable fathers of families deploring the corruption of the young, which is now too evident, have persuaded the Liberator President that the general plan of studies has without doubt essential defects that demand prompt remedy in order to effect a radical cure of the evils which the vices and immorality of the young presage for the fatherland.

His Excellency, philosophically pondering the plan of studies, believes that he has found the origin of the evil in the political sciences that have been taught to the students on beginning their career in a major faculty, when they still do not have the judgment to make the modifications in the principles that are demanded by the peculiar circumstances of each nation. The evil has also grown exceedingly because of the authors that were chosen for the study of principles of legislation, like Bentham and others who, alongside brilliant maxims, contain many that are opposed to religion, morals, and the tranquillity of peoples, of which we have now sadly received the first fruits.

In addition to this, when the young were rashly given a mortal poison in those authors, which destroyed their religion and their morals, in no way were they taught the true principles of the one and of the other, so that they could not resist the attacks of the impious and irreligious maxims that they were reading at every step. To avoid these and other hazards, the Liberator President, with the advice of his council of ministers and having seen the report of the Central University of Bogotá, has resolved to make the following changes in the plan of studies, which shall be put in practice immediately on a provisional basis and until the

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<sup>1</sup> A department was the largest of the territorial subdivisions of Gran Colombia; its highest civil official was the intendant. [Ed.]

Council of State proposes to the government the permanent reforms that should be made:

1. That the greatest attention be given to the study and re-establishment of Latin, which is so necessary for the knowledge of religion and for good literature, for which purpose each year in the courses of philosophy some branch will be taught in Latin; and in the colleges and universities literary acts will be held in this language. Moreover, no one will be admitted to study in a major faculty if he does not satisfy the rector of the respective university that he knows Latin; and in case of any doubt an examination will be demanded of the student even if he has previously studied philosophy.
2. That care be taken to have the students of philosophy fill the major part of the second year with the study of morals and natural law, in order that they may be grounded in the most essential principles of morality, which is so advantageous to man in society.
3. That for now the chairs of principles of universal legislation, of public political law, constitution, and administrative science be suspended and not in use, and consequently that no salaries be paid to their professors.
4. That four years be spent in the study of Roman civil law, national law, and canonical jurisprudence, the respective suboffices [of instruction] in the cities where there is a university being authorized to make the provisional distribution of courses, which the intendant of the department shall approve.
5. That starting with this first year the youths be obliged to attend a course of fundamentals and apologia of the Roman Catholic religion, of its history and ecclesiastical history, which shall form an essential part of their studies in a major faculty; and this instruction shall last one or two years, as the respective suboffice may see fit, care being taken that the time is sufficient for the students to be grounded in the principles of our holy religion and thus able on the one hand to refute the sophisms of the impious and on the other to resist the stimuli of their passions. This chair shall be paid for with what was

given to the professor of principles of legislation, and much care shall be taken to choose a person fitted both by his learning and by his piety to hold it.

6. That in the fifth and sixth years of study of jurisprudence the students be taught principles of political economy and international law, these being combined with the courses of civil and canonical jurisprudence if it should be necessary in order to complete the four years of study of this faculty. These changes shall be made starting with the present or coming school year, and the suppressed chairs shall remain so the following year. Your Lordship [*Vuestra Señoría*] shall send me the distribution of courses that the suboffice proposes and Your Lordship approves. You shall likewise ask the same suboffice for its report on the permanent reforms that in its opinion should be made in the general plan of studies to improve it and simplify it. Separately you shall propose the means that might be used to keep pure the morals and customs of youth and to preserve it from the mortal poison of the impious, irreligious, and obscene books that do so much damage to its morality and conduct. God keep Your Lordship.

José Manuel Restrepo



## The Final Cry of Despair

*One of the most familiar passages from Bolívar's correspondence is the cry of despair that he included in a letter to General Juan José Flores, written at Barranquilla—en route to exile—on November 9, 1830.*

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Translated from Simón Bolívar, *Cartas del Libertador* (1st ed., 12 vols., Caracas and New York, 1929–1959), IX, 376–377.

*It reflects the Liberator's bitter reaction both to the final dissolution of Gran Colombia and to the civil strife that had already broken out since he stepped down from the presidency.*

MY DEAR GENERAL:

You know that I have been in command for twenty years; and from them I have derived only a few sure conclusions: first, America is ungovernable for us; second, he who serves a revolution ploughs the sea; third, the only thing that can be done in America is to emigrate; fourth, this country will fall without fail into the hands of an unbridled multitude, to pass later to petty, almost imperceptible tyrants of all colors and races; fifth, devoured as we are by all crimes and destroyed by ferocity, the Europeans will not deign to conquer us; sixth, if it were possible for a part of the world to return to the primeval chaos, the latter would be the final stage of America.

The first French revolution caused the slaughtering of the Antilles, and the second <sup>1</sup> will cause the same effect in this vast continent. The sudden reaction of exaggerated ideology is going to fill us with whatever evils we were lacking, or rather is going to complete them. You will see that everyone is going to abandon himself to the torrent of demagoguery; and what unfortunate peoples, what unfortunate governments!

Simón Bolívar

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<sup>1</sup> The "July Revolution" of 1830. [Ed.]

## ❧ II ❧

# Man and Warrior



Daniel F. O'Leary

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## Portrait of Bolívar

*Few men knew the Liberator as well as did his Irish-born aide-de-camp, Daniel F. O'Leary, whose memoirs constitute the most important of all the firsthand accounts left by participants in the independence struggle of the Bolivarian nations. The following passage, in which O'Leary attempts both a physical and a character sketch of Bolívar, has become a standard description. It reflects the author's deep personal admiration but does not lack realistic details.*

Bolívar had a high forehead, but not very wide and lined with wrinkles from an early age—the sign of a thinker. His eyebrows were thick and well-formed, his eyes black, lively, and penetrating. His nose was long and perfect; he had a small wen on it that greatly bothered him until it disappeared in 1820 leaving an almost imperceptible mark. His cheek bones were prominent; his cheeks were sunken, from the time I first knew him in 1818. His mouth was ugly and his lips somewhat thick. The distance from his nose to his mouth was notable. His teeth were white, uniform, and very handsome; he took excellent care of them. His ears were large but well placed. His hair was black, fine, and curly; he wore it long in the years from 1818 to 1821, when

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Translated from *Memorias del general Daniel Florencio O'Leary; narración* (3 vols., Caracas, 1952), I, 491–494.

it began to turn gray; and after that he wore it short. His sideburns and moustache were reddish; he shaved them off for the first time in Potosí in 1825. His stature was five feet, six inches. He had a narrow chest; his body was slender, his legs especially. His skin was dark and somewhat rough. His hands and feet were small and well formed, such as a woman would have envied. His appearance was serene when he was in good humor but terrifying when he was irritated; the change was incredible.

Bolívar always had a good appetite, but he knew how to suffer hunger better than anyone. Although a great appreciator and connoisseur of good cooking, he ate with pleasure the simple and primitive foods of the llanero or the Indian. He was very sober; his favorite wines were Graves and champagne; not even at the time when he was most given to drinking wine did I ever see him take more than four cups of the former or two of the latter. When it was served, he himself filled the cups of the guests whom he seated at his side.

He exercised a great deal. I have not known anyone who bore fatigue as he did. After a day's march that would have been enough to overcome the most robust man, I have seen him work five or six hours, or dance just as many, with that passion which he had for dancing. He slept five or six hours of the twenty-four in a hammock, on a cot, on a hide, or wrapped in his cape on the ground and in the open, just as he might on soft feathers. His sleep was so light and his awakening so prompt that to nothing else did he owe the saving of his life at Rincón de los Toros.<sup>1</sup> In range of sight and keenness of hearing not even the llaneros surpassed him. He was skillful in the handling of arms and a very skillful and daring rider, although not very elegant on horseback. Devoted to horses, he personally inspected their care; and on campaign or in the city he visited the horses several times a day. Taking great pains with his dress and given to extreme cleanliness, he bathed every day and in

<sup>1</sup> A ranch on the Venezuelan llanos where Bolívar was almost caught and killed in March 1818 by a party of Spanish soldiers who successfully penetrated the patriot camp by discovering and giving the password. [Ed.]

hot lands up to three times a day. He preferred the life of the country to that of the city. He detested drunks and gamblers, but gossips and impostors he detested even more. He was so loyal and gentlemanly that he did not permit anyone to speak evil of others in his presence. Friendship was for him a sacred word. More trusting than anyone, if he discovered a deception or falsehood, he did not pardon the one who had abused his confidence.

His generosity bordered on prodigality. He not only gave everything he had of his own but went into debt to serve others. Prodigal with what belonged to him, he was almost stingy with public funds. He might sometimes have listened to flattery, but adulation made him indignant.

He spoke much and well; he possessed the rare gift of conversation, and he liked to tell anecdotes of his past life. His style was flowery and correct; his speeches and his writings are full of daring and original images. His proclamations are a model of military eloquence. In his dispatches, clarity and precision shine forth equally with gracefulness of style. In the orders he communicated to his lieutenants, he did not forget even the most trivial detail. He calculated everything, foresaw everything.

He had the gift of persuasion and knew how to inspire confidence in others. To these qualities are due, in great part, the amazing triumphs that he obtained in circumstances so difficult that another man without those gifts and without the temper of his soul would have been disheartened. A creative genius *par excellence*, he drew resources out of nothing. "Bolívar was more to be feared defeated than victorious," said his enemies. Reverses made him superior to himself.

In the conduct of civil affairs, which he never neglected even on campaign, he was as ready and able as in the other acts of his life. Rocking in his hammock or walking about, usually with long steps since his natural restlessness was not suited to repose, with his arms crossed or seizing his coat collar with his left hand and placing the index finger of his right hand on his upper lip, he would hear his secretary read the official correspondence and the innumerable memorials and private letters that were addressed to him. As

the secretary read, he was dictating his decision on the memorials; and this decision was, in general, irrevocable. He would then dictate official dispatches and letters to as many as three amanuenses at a time; for he never left one without answering, no matter how humble the person who wrote to him. Even if he was interrupted while dictating, I never heard him make a mistake or be confused in renewing the phrase. When he did not know the correspondent or petitioner, he asked one or two questions. This happened very rarely because, endowed with a prodigious memory, he knew not only all the officers of the army but all the civil employees and notable persons of the country.

A great knower of men and of the human heart, he understood at first glance what each one could serve for; and he was very rarely mistaken.

He read much, in spite of the little time that his occupations left him for reading. He wrote very little with his own hand, only to the members of his family or to some intimate friend; but on signing what he dictated, he almost always added one or two lines in his handwriting.

He spoke and wrote French correctly, and Italian with fair perfection; he knew little English, barely enough to understand what he read. He thoroughly knew the Greek and Latin classics, which he had studied, and he always read them with pleasure in good French translations.

The attacks that the press directed against him made a great impression on him, and calumny irritated him. A public man for over twenty years, his sensitive nature could never overcome this susceptibility, which is not very common in men placed in eminent positions. He had a high opinion of the sublime mission of the press, as a watcher of public morals and a restraint on passions. He attributed the greatness and morality of the English people to the good use that is made in England of this civilizing agent.

Hiram Paulding

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Bolívar in His Camp

*One of the relatively few United States citizens who left an account of their personal impressions of Bolívar was the naval officer Hiram Paulding, who in mid-1824 paid a brief visit on official business to the Liberator's camp at Huaraz in the Peruvian Andes. Paulding did not attempt a detailed description of Bolívar's character or appearance, but it is obvious that Bolívar impressed him favorably. The sketch (first published in 1834) is both sympathetic and unaffected, and it incorporates a number of observations that the Liberator made to him on political and other matters.*

. . . I was ushered into a long hall where General Bolívar was seated at dinner with about fifty of his officers in splendid uniforms. His Excellency rose from the table, I was introduced as an officer of the United States, he asked my rank, shook me cordially by the hand, and bade me be seated alongside of him. He invited me to dine, but readily excused me when I declined doing so. "I presume you have had little wine on the road you have traveled," said he,

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Reprinted from Rebecca Paulding Meade, *Life of Hiram Paulding, Rear-Admiral, U.S.N.* (New York, 1910), pp. 62-64, 68-72, 74-76.

"and therefore you will not refuse to take a glass of champagne with me."

He asked me a variety of questions about my journey, talked freely upon various subjects, bade the officers to fill round with wine, and introduced me by drinking my health in a bumper. His cordiality, his frankness, and his unceremonious courtesy relieved me entirely from the awkward feeling I had experienced at my first introduction. He continued to talk incessantly and with great animation while he remained at the table, which was but for a short time after my arrival. When he desired no longer to continue the pleasures of the table, he became silent, and rising from his seat the officers immediately took their leave. After the company had retired I asked whether His Excellency would then receive the despatches I had the honor of bearing to him or whether they should be delivered on the following day, to which he replied, "I will receive them now and examine them immediately. You shall return to your Commander with my reply as soon as it is possible to have it prepared for you." He apologized for not entertaining me in his own house, saying there was not a room in it unoccupied, and, calling to him Captain Wilson, one of his aides, bade him obtain comfortable lodgings for me in the house of some citizen. . . .

At half-past four [on the following day] dinner was announced. A large number of officers were assembled in the hall. They saluted as he made his appearance; and, placing me at his right hand and my companion at his left, the company was seated round the table furnished in the plainest possible manner. During the whole morning his countenance had been grave and thoughtful, even to deep and settled melancholy; but from the moment he took the head of his table, surrounded by the officers of his army, the whole man appeared to undergo an entire change. The settled gloom passed from his careworn features, his eyes sparkled with animation, and with a flow of eloquent railery or good-natured sarcasm, addressing himself from one to another of his guests, he threw such a charm around the social board that all eyes were fixed upon him with gratification and delight.

To the veteran Colonel Sands, an Irishman whose long career of useful service in Colombia gave him a high place in the Liberator's esteem and who arrived on the preceding day at the head of a regiment called the "Rifles," he spoke of their former campaigns, asking whether on the plains of Houca [i.e., Jauja] (where in a few days the Spaniards were expected to have been met) his gallant regiment could maintain the glory they had acquired in so many hard-fought battles. The Colonel, as remarkable for his diffidence as he was for his intrepidity, blushed deeply as he replied in the affirmative. The Liberator, then addressing the company, related a number of brilliant achievements performed by the regiment and of individuals belonging to it. From Colonel Sands and the "Rifles," with a grace peculiar to himself, he turned the eulogium upon other regiments and divisions of the Colombian Army, in all of which some of the officers present had acquired a reputation. He said that history, whether ancient or modern, could not furnish brighter examples of patriotic devotion or individual heroism than were recorded in the history of the revolution of Colombia. In confirmation he went on to recount with minuteness and perspicuity the brilliant achievements of some of the martyrs to liberty with whom he had been personally acquainted or whose efforts were in unison with his own in the great struggle for emancipation.

It surprised me not a little to hear the comparisons he made in passing from Colombia to Peru. He condemned the people of Peru in general terms, said they were cowards and as a people did not possess a single manly virtue. I thought, though his remarks were just, they were both impolitic and ill timed, and calculated to injure him seriously in the estimation of the people of that country, while it could not possibly answer any useful purpose. I was informed that he was accustomed to speak in the same terms of the Peruvians on all occasions; and to this I believe it may be reasonably ascribed that the inhabitants of Peru did not evince more gratitude toward the Colombians for their fraternal assistance in driving the Spaniards from their country.

The dinner was served after the Spanish custom of plac-

ing it on the table in different courses, as many as seven or eight of which came in succession. The Liberator ate very heartily and I think must have had his plate changed a dozen times in making his dinner. He drank freely of wine and encouraged his guests to do so. He gave out a number of toasts, several of which were drunk with acclamation. Among those in compliment to my country was the memory of Washington, drunk standing.

Calling on me for a toast, I gave "Success to the liberating army of Peru and the Washington of the south, may glory attend them." In the course of the repast he turned to me, saying, "My enemies abuse me very much and among other falsehoods they have told of me they say I use gold knives." Holding toward me the knife he was using at the time, which was of a very ordinary kind, much worn, he said, smiling, "Does that look like gold? They say I wish to establish an empire in Peru, or, uniting Peru to Colombia, establish an absolute government and place myself at the head of it. It is all false," said he; "they do me great injustice. If I know my own heart," putting his right hand upon his left breast, "I would rather walk in the footsteps of Washington and die the death of Washington than to be the monarch of the whole earth; and this is known to all who know me well."

In the course of the repast some allusion was made to the Spanish Army in upper Peru, when the Liberator, embracing every opportunity of inspiring confidence in his officers, spoke of the Spaniards in the severest terms of scorn and contempt, intimating in the course of his remarks that one Colombian was equal to two or three Spaniards on the field of battle. . . .

On the following morning, June 13,<sup>1</sup> I went again to breakfast with the Liberator. He rose from his seat when he saw me enter the court and advanced to receive me. He took my hands, said he was better, and invited me to be seated in his audience room. At one end of the room there was a small chapel with tapers burning, such as is often

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<sup>1</sup> Really two days later; on the 12th, Bolívar was not feeling well, and Paulding's account for that day has been omitted. [Ed.]



seen in Catholic gentlemen's houses. Pointing to it he said, "You do not go to mass I suppose." I replied that although no Catholic, I sometimes went to mass when in a Catholic country. "What is your religion?" said he. I replied, "The Protestant." "Now," he observed, "religion depends a good deal on fashion." I asked if the Protestant religions were tolerated in Colombia. "When the constitution of Colombia was framed," said he, "knowing that toleration of other than the Catholic religion would not be received, I took care that nothing should be said about religion, so that as there was no clause prescribing the manner of worship, strangers worship as they please."

Three priests came in richly dressed and were politely received by the Liberator, with whom they sat and conversed for some time. When they retired he saw them to the door; and, turning from them toward his seat, he remarked, "Esos moncas son ton feo como diablos."<sup>2</sup> I asked whether the priests were generally favorable to the revolution. He replied that those were friendly to it who were born in the country but that all the Spanish priests were opposed to it. Although their power was much lessened and was daily decreasing, they had still, he said, a great deal of influence. "No old Spaniard," said he, "is friendly to the revolution. They will pretend to favor the cause of the patriots while we have them in our power, but the moment they can aid the royalists they will do so. Their customs, their manners, their sentiments, their principles, and even their color are all bad. They come here bringing with them a combination of all the vices of our nature. They have corrupted the people of the country. They have mixed with negroes and Indians and devils and have formed the most accursed race that ever lived. This country," said he, "can never prosper for a hundred years to come. Two generations must pass away first. The people of Europe and North America must be encouraged to settle here, bringing with them their commerce, their arts and sciences. These advantages, an inde-

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<sup>2</sup> The correct Spanish would be: "Esos monjes son tan feos como diablos." In English: "Those monks are as ugly as devils." [Ed.]

pendent government, free schools, and intermarriages with Europeans and North Americans would change," he said, "the whole character of the people and make them intelligent and prosperous."

I was unacquainted with the constitution of Colombia and in the course of this morning's conversation asked him if it were similar to that of the United States. He replied that it differed materially from that of the United States. "Your Government," said he, "cannot last. The executive has not power enough. The States have too much. Dissension and disunion will be the ultimate consequence. It is much to be regretted. With a stronger Government your country would be the most powerful in the world in fifty years. Your commerce must be extensive, your countrymen are brave and enterprising, you have fine harbors and an abundance of timber and iron, and the time must come when you will drive England from the ocean. All Europe, imbibing the principles of America, will become free, and the civilized world in less than a hundred years will be governed by philosophy. There will no longer be kings. The people will find out their power and the advantages of liberty."

Alfred Hasbrouck

## The Boyacá Campaign

*In the last analysis, Bolívar won the title of Liberator not by writing speeches and manifestoes but by liberating; and in the face of armed resistance the latter had to be above all a military function. However, his stature as a military leader is not easy to assess. He fought under a wide variety of conditions; he had his full share of defeats as well as victories; and his military "thought" cannot be found conveniently distilled in a select group of major texts as can his political thinking. For whatever reason, there simply is no adequate brief summation of his qualities as a strategist and tactician. On the other hand, there is no lack of narrative descriptions of his military exploits, of which the most decisive was without doubt the campaign that culminated in the victory of Boyacá on August 7, 1819. In the short run, the Boyacá campaign gave the patriots possession of Bogotá, the capital of the Viceroyalty of New Granada, and of the immediately surrounding area; its long-term significance was that it provided them with a base of human and material resources to be used in further conquests and that it marked the definitive passing of initiative from royalist to patriot hands. It is retold in the following short*

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Reprinted from A. Curtis Wilgus, ed., *Colonial Hispanic America* (Washington: George Washington University Press, 1938), pp. 472-478, with permission of A. Curtis Wilgus.

*selection by Alfred Hasbrouck, who was also the author of a separate study of the foreign volunteers who fought under Bolívar and was in fact one of the few non-Latin American historians with a special interest in military aspects of the independence period.*

. . . [The] contingents [of foreign legionaries], together with natives which the patriot generals had been able to recruit, brought the strength of the patriot armies up to approximately the strength of Morillo's forces in Venezuela. Hence, the arrival of these foreign legionaries by 1819 gave Bolívar a force of infantry strong enough for him to plan a new offensive.

His thoughts turned back to New Granada from which he had made his invasion for the liberation of the second republic of Venezuela. The patriots in New Granada were still struggling to win their independence; why could he not turn about and help them with an army led from Venezuela? Bolívar saw that this was possible now and that the liberation of New Granada would be such a severe blow to the royalists that it would help to preserve the independence of Venezuela. He could now carry out this plan for he had sufficient infantry to make the invasion of New Granada and could trust to the cavalry of Páez to protect his rear by keeping the royalists busy. Bolívar, therefore, sent some of his recruits to reenforce Urdaneta, Bermúdez, and Mariño who were to make diversions along the coast against Caracas, ordered Páez to continue guerrilla operations in the Orinoco valley and to interpose his cavalry between Morillo and the mountains; and he himself determined to lead his main force in an invasion of New Granada to liberate that province [*sic*] from royalist control.

This plan for the invasion of New Granada Bolívar kept secret even from his own officers until one day in May 1819 he broached it to them at a council of war at which he had assembled less than a dozen of his generals, where, in a little ruined hut in the deserted village of Setenta, they were grouped about him reclining on the bare ground or

sitting on the skulls of oxen whitened by the sun and rain. . . .

On May 26 the Army, consisting of four battalions of infantry (one thousand three hundred men) and eight hundred cavalry, began its advance from Mantecal. The fact that this was the beginning of the rainy season was both an advantage and a disadvantage, for it was assumed, and rightly, that the royalists would withdraw into their garrisons and would not attempt to campaign during the rainy season unless forced to do so. The disadvantages to the patriots of going into the field at this time were many, and how the daily downpour hampered their movements can be appreciated only by one who has experienced a rainy season in the tropics. The rain fell in solid sheets almost obliterating the landscape from view until that landscape had disappeared under the rising waters. Small streams which were nothing more than arid gullies during the dry season now became rushing rivers, while real rivers became lakes and seas. . . .

For nearly a month Bolívar's troops were crossing the Province of Casanare, wading in mud and water. . . . Their arms and ammunition and even their food were so wet as to be almost unusable; their clothing rotted on their backs and became torn into shreds and tatters. The weaker men and the women who followed their husbands were in constant danger of sinking beneath the waters and the stronger ones were in terror of the caymans and caribes, or of the man-eating fish which infested these streams. . . .

Hesitating to venture into such infested waters might be excused even in the best disciplined soldier, but when a body of troops was once in, to retreat was as dangerous as to advance. To keep on going required more than discipline and courage; it required blind determination and implicit faith in one's leader. Only Bolívar's personality could have inspired this faith or could have resisted the tendency to give up. His men knew that he would not call upon them to do more than he himself would do, and they felt confident that he would help them whenever he could. He took the lead in overcoming danger and hardship, shared with the

men his scanty rations, and time after time swam his horse back and forth across an especially difficult river to rescue from its swirling waters any who might become exhausted and need his assistance to carry them across.

On arrival at Tame a junction was effected with the New Granadian patriots under General Francisco de Paula Santander. Here, fresh provisions were at hand and the exhausted Venezuelans were permitted to rest in preparation for even more arduous marching. After leaving Tame, the trail led up the foothills into the mountains, . . . Nearly a week was spent in struggling up these mountain ramparts to the *Páramo* of Pisba. The rough and narrow trail ascended by almost perpendicular and exhausting grades or swung around a corner on a dizzy shelf a thousand feet above the bottom of a gorge. Footing on both slopes and shelves was precarious, for the rains and the climbing feet converted the rocky soil into greasy mud, and in the upper heights films of ice formed along the footways. The cold biting winds penetrated the worn and flimsy clothing which was suitable as protection against the sun during the dry season but now served only to retain the rain until it froze. As they climbed higher these men of the plains and lowlands began to suffer splitting headaches, nausea, and extreme drowsiness, until they foamed at the mouth and went mad, owing to the terrible *soroche*, or mountain sickness, . . .

The *Paramo* of Pisba is a pass or saddle between the higher peaks lying at 12,000 feet altitude far above the timber line. Nothing grows upon it except lichens and a tall species of mullen called *frailejón* so there is no wood or fuel of any kind. A drizzling mist is always falling and an icy draft howls across the stony plain. The night spent in crossing this *paramo* was the worst in all that long nightmare of marches. . . .

Fortunately this was the dawn of better days. Presently the beautiful mountain valley of Serinza lay before them, where the climate was milder, where food and supplies were furnished by the patriotic inhabitants, and where recruits were enlisted to fill the places made vacant by the hardships of this terrific march. Statistics of losses at this particular period are not available although it is known that

one-third of the British perished on the march and not a single horse or mule survived.

Little opposition from the enemy had been met on this march, for Bolívar had chosen the most difficult and dangerous trail and had thereby avoided the outposts which awaited him along the more usually traveled route. Likewise throughout the rest of this campaign Bolívar outwitted the royalist commander, José Barreiro, by marching around his prepared positions, attacking his defenses on the flank, leaving a small detachment to distract his attention, and then attacking suddenly where he least expected it. The strategy of Bolívar's campaign in New Granada, by its vigor, its unexpectedness, its secrecy, its sudden changes of base, its flank marches and attacks, strikingly resembled the equally successful strategy of Stonewall Jackson's famous Valley Campaign.

Barreiro's mission was to prevent Bolívar reaching Bogotá; Bolívar's aim was to get there. From his central position at Sogamoso, Barreiro might have held either of the two routes along the mountains. Bolívar deceived him into believing that he would advance by one road, drew him away from his strong position, and then countermarched and swung around to the other route.

Although there were a number of skirmishes fought between detachments of the rival armies, only two battles need be mentioned. These were at the Pantano [Swamp] de Vargas and at Boyacá. When Barreiro thought that Bolívar was advancing by the road through Paipa, he allowed himself to be drawn from his position at Sogamoso and advanced as far as the narrow defile known as the Pantano . . . de Vargas. This was a strong position in which to make a stand, for Barreiro held the heights overlooking the road while Bolívar was limited in maneuvering ground by the swamps on his right. It looked as if Bolívar had been caught in a trap, but the valor of his troops not only saved him from disaster but weakened Barreiro's strength so materially as to take away his initiative and force him to act on the defensive and wait for Bolívar to make the next move. In the infantry charge up the heights Colonel Rooke was mortally wounded and Anzoátegui's patriot infantry

suffered severely, but in the cavalry charge along the road by Colonel Rondón and his small detachment of *llaneros*, the royalist cavalry was annihilated.

After both sides had withdrawn to their original positions, Bolívar continued to make feints along the Paipa road. On August 3 he threatened to attack the royalist position of Sogamoso; but that night, under cover of darkness, countermarched his army, recrossed the Sogamoso River which he had crossed that afternoon when he was pretending to return to his encampment and swung around Barreiro's position until he was between the royalists and Bogotá. That night the patriots were on their way to the capital, having captured by surprise the royalist arsenal at Tunja with all its supplies.

Had the royalist scouts and patrols been properly active and efficient in keeping contact with the patriots, Barreiro would not have been outwitted in this way. As soon, however, as he became aware of the situation, he hastened to retrieve matters by placing himself again between the patriots and the capital, and by marching south on another road further to the west which joined the road from Tunja at the bridge of Boyacá. Whoever should cross this bridge first would command the road to Bogotá. It was a race for the bridge, and Bolívar's troops had the start although he himself delayed in Tunja superintending the collection of the captured stores of munitions.

At two o'clock in the afternoon of August 7, 1819, the advance guards of both the royalist and patriot armies met at the junction of the roads within sight of the bridge of Boyacá. In the skirmish which ensued the royalists made a short stand in a tile-roofed farmhouse near the road fork but were soon driven out by an impetuous charge of patriot skirmishes and retreated across the bridge to occupy the heights on the south bank of the river. This was an initial advantage which Barreiro tried to make the most of by rushing his main body forward to join his advance guard at the bridge. In doing so he exposed his left flank to attack by the Second Division of the republican Army under Anzoátegui which was following a short distance behind the patriot advance guard. The arrival of these troops checked



the movement of the royalists toward the bridge and forced them to retire to some rocky ridges which commanded the road from Tunja. There they formed a defensive line about their artillery and held on against Anzoátegui's attack.

Meanwhile, the First Division of the patriots under Santander swung down the road toward the bridge where it was checked by fire from the royalist vanguard. Since he could not cross the bridge under such heavy fire, he sent his cavalry to find an old ford further downstream. Having crossed the river by this ford the patriot cavalry attacked the flank of the royalist position south of the river, occupying the attention of the enemy until Santander could cross the bridge and dislodge them from their position.

Anzoátegui's impetuous charges had by this time penetrated the lines of the royalists north of the bridge and had thrown them into a huddled confusion. Barreiro, realizing that his army was cut in two and that he could not retreat toward Bogotá, threw away his sword and gave himself up as a prisoner. Some of the royalist advance guard managed to escape toward Bogotá; but the rest of it, as well as the main body, had to surrender. In a battle lasting less than two hours the royalist army defending New Granada was wiped out, its commander, thirty-nine officers and one thousand six hundred men were made prisoners; and all its arms, ammunition, guns, horses, colors, and baggage were captured.

The Battle of Boyacá was the decisive battle in the campaign, for it opened the road to the capital. . . . In spite of the enormous difficulties he had encountered and overcome, Bolívar had thus brought to a successful conclusion in only seventy-five days his campaign of New Granada.

### ❧ III ❧

## Cult and Anticult

Germán Carrera Damas

## The Cult to the Liberator (I)

*Latin American historiography offers numerous examples of national heroes who have absorbed the attention of their countries' historians to the neglect of other topics and who have been so extravagantly praised that it is sometimes hard to distinguish their true greatness amid the clouds of rhetoric. Simón Bolívar is, of course, a notable example. Indeed the Mexican-trained and Marxist-oriented Germán Carrera Damas—who from his position as head of the Escuela de Historia at the Universidad Central de Venezuela has made an important contribution toward raising the study of history in Venezuela to the status of a modern professional discipline—not only observes that Bolívar has been the object of a “cult” but comes close to affirming that in Venezuela the cult in question has served as “opiate for the people.” Whether or not one accepts his viewpoint, and despite a style that is difficult to translate, the following passages from Carrera Damas are both refreshingly original and highly suggestive. It should be*

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Translated from the unpublished study of Germán Carrera Damas, “El culto a Bolívar,” pp. 3–6, 265–266, with permission of the author.

*noted, however, that not all the writing about Bolívar has been "cultist" in the pejorative sense. Even much that has been written in his favor is well worth reading; and, as will be seen later, not all has been in his favor.*

The vastness of Bolivarian bibliography contrasts with its interpretative monotony and its anecdotal flow. For the most part it has not risen above the level of the lives of saints written with evangelizing intent, and it is not even possible to state that its most eminent exponents have succeeded in avoiding the anecdotal approach. On the basis of the weaving of anecdotes the moral and spiritual figure of Bolívar, above all, has been constructed. For the warrior, the politician, and the administrator the sources are different, although neither is the anecdote rejected in studying these aspects of a life and a work whose abundance of traces, and the state of systematization of the same, now permit them to be studied with adherence to the most demanding norms of historical methodology.

To such a historiography belongs the credit, and perhaps the responsibility, for having structured and carried to its greatest splendor the Bolivarian cult. It can well be said that almost no detail has been neglected for that purpose; and neither has the historiography shrunk from small or great interpretative inconsequences, nor has it hesitated in manifestly extinguishing its own critical spirit and indignantly assailing that of others.

Literary romanticism, transposed to historiography by writers who were just that more than they were historians, has traditionally been cited to explain this process, at least in its beginnings. To the romantic exaltation of Felipe Larrazábal [Document 13] and Juan Vicente González,<sup>1</sup> principally, is attributed the creation of the Bolivarian cult.

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<sup>1</sup> Juan Vicente González (1808-1866)—poet, essayist, historian, and above all polemical journalist—was one of nineteenth century Venezuela's foremost literary figures. He was, of course, an ardent admirer of Bolívar. [Ed.]

In effect, the exaltation of a supreme and creative figure, capable of personifying what is highest and purest in the human soul as well as the perfectibility of man, constituted an appropriate substitute for the doctrine of the noble savage, which had declined on this side of the ocean because of the direct vision and experience of a savagery that not even the most hallucinated fantasy could picture as representing the purifying hopes of the dissatisfied.

But, despite the clear fact of the essential connection of the Bolivarian cult with romanticism, we believe it exaggerated to attribute to the latter the origin of the former. Even if the expression of the cult fits perfectly with the motifs of romanticism, its origin is something else, [and] the historical reasons for its appearance and, above all, its tenacity are different; for, very far from being a merely literary or historiographical affair, that cult is properly a question of political and social order; and it is very important to establish a clear understanding of its foundations and power of survival, which have been little less than unaltered despite variations in its forms of expression. . . .

And the fact is that the cult to the historical figure of Bolívar is far from being a literary creation, born of the exalted patriotism and superexcited sensibility of one or various writers. That cult has constituted, to be exact, a historical necessity, . . . Its function has been that of dissembling a failure and delaying a disillusion, and it has fulfilled it satisfactorily until now.

This expedient could be characterized as an ideological recourse, if not hoax, thanks to which it was possible to even the historical balance of the emancipation struggle, allowing an outcome unfavorable to the aspirations of the popular masses to be set against the luminous and ever-attainable perspective of the perfection of a work whose defects were all too evident. Thanks to this ideological recourse, or hoax, it was possible to compensate for the discouragement caused by the results of an enterprise of emancipation that was born and promoted ostensibly for the regeneration of society, until then corrupted and degraded by the effects of a colonialism whose negative hues it was necessary to heighten at the time of justifying the

insurgency. At the end of the struggle it was not possible even to glimpse the promised reign of liberty, equality, and, above all, fraternity among the men who had made common cause against the despotism, inequality, and hatred represented by the colonial power. Discouragement spread, and it had many ways of expressing itself: from the rebelliousness of the "bandits" who agitated the countryside for some years, to the inner disillusionment set down by more than one patriot leader in their memoirs or political testaments. There was a need to explain, and not precisely . . . as an ideological task, . . . but as an unavoidable response to a real, active demand of that same people who, after agreeing to unbelievable sacrifices, not only did not see the arrival of the promised reward but felt it growing more and more distant.

The solution given to this difficulty by the ideologues of the landowning and commercial bourgeoisie, the promoter and beneficiary of independence, consisted in declaring permanently open the quest for those beautiful results that were presented at the beginning as the automatic product of emancipation. In this way, all that had been lived through was reduced to a mere prior stage [of an endeavor] whose results it was not yet necessary to consolidate but rather to achieve from that point forward.

Well now, the life of Bolívar admirably condenses and exemplifies the whole process: from the blind and sincere initial conviction to the bitter final disillusion, passing through an agitated stage of grasping and analyzing the reasons for so unfortunate a transition. This is reflected in the numerous samples of his thought, it is expressed in the tragic course of his action and of his life. The latter was, at the same time, an indication of the perfection that was possible and evidence of the obstacles that had [so far] prevented the realization of his goals. Hence the historical necessity of the cult.

In [the continuing] search for a social order that would carry out the program of the emancipation, Bolívar has performed, through the cult of which he is the object, a multiple role. For one thing he symbolized the possibilities

of the Venezuelan, refuting with his mere existence the theses that denigrate those possibilities. For another, he was raised up as an examining judge, representing the national conscience to which Venezuelans were formally committed in their individual and collective effort to achieve a stable society and progress. Even more, his symbolic figure offered to the disheartened a consolation and a refuge to which they could repair in quest of new strength when overcome by the hostility of the environment. But perhaps the most important function was that which was assigned to him as a proven guide, capable of orienting everyone's striving to attain the results which were so long in coming. This he did, at the same time as his cult was acquiring for Venezuelans the character of a second religion with heroic perfection as its goal. Such perfection is personified in Bolívar, who epitomizes in his glory the virtues and aspirations of a whole people.

It is from this historically objective base that the cult is built. Under the influence of a strongly religious popular consciousness, the admiration and gratitude of the people soon took on an aspect of mythification of the admired and beloved hero. The vastness of the work symbolized by him and the exalted appreciation of the seemingly superhuman difficulties that he had to conquer opened up the normal path of mythification. On another level, the work of historians and writers imbued with an extreme individualist concept of history and skilled in the handling of romantic means of expression contributed to the same result.

But the mythification of the hero had in this case a special quality, which distinguishes it from what is usual in such processes. The hero loses his dimensions as these are more and more studied, more and more defined. This fact, which might seem paradoxical, is explained because the hero is not mythified only in the popular and legendary manner, but as the object of a cult. . . . For that purpose emphasis has been placed on all aspects of his life, interpreting them according to criteria of predestination and of supernatural gifts that have culminated in deification pure and simple.

Fermín Toro

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## Description of the Funeral Honors

*When the Liberator died at Santa Marta in December 1830 he was persona non grata to his native Venezuela, where for the moment the anti-Bolivarian reaction had progressed even farther than in New Granada. This was, however, a temporary phenomenon, which lost its principal reason for being as soon as it became clear that there would be no serious effort to revive the Colombian union. First José Antonio Páez, the dominant figure of the new Venezuelan state, and then other Venezuelan factions sought to rehabilitate the memory of the Liberator and simultaneously to wrap themselves securely in the mantle of his policies and ideals. The culmination of this process came in 1842, with the return of the Liberator's remains from Santa Marta to Caracas and the elaborate public ceremonies that marked the occasion. In the words of Fermín Toro, who was perhaps the foremost intellectual spokesman of Venezuela's ruling "Conservative Oligarchy"—in effect, the party of Páez—these events ushered in a "new*

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Translated from Fermín Toro, "Descripción de las honras fúnebres consagradas a los restos del Libertador Simón Bolívar," in Félix R. Fragachán, comp., *Simón Bolívar; síntesis panorámica de la vida del grande hombre* (Caracas, 1942), pp. 36–38, 40–43.



*era" for Venezuela. They signaled the official birth of what became the "cult to Bolívar"; and they also provide another good example of the Hispanic American preoccupation with the physical remains of dead heroes.*

My task is arduous, if not impossible. Amid the ardent enthusiasm awakened by the exequies of Bolívar—exequies in which an entire people has shown forth all its latent strength of feeling and admiration—much is expected of the writer who with high spirits, if not temerity, presumes to describe them. But today one expects in vain; my description will be tepid, my concepts lacking in vigor, and the whole picture colorless, compared with the splendor of the scene.

Twelve years had passed since the death of Bolívar, twelve years in which his country, the witnesses of his glory, and the stupendous works of his genius and his sword all were mute; and it appeared that they were paying the great tribute of their admiration and respect in silence. . . . What profound truths about human destinies are revealed in the situation of the illustrious *Caudillo* of South American independence, the valiant champion covered with laurels in a hundred battles, that Titan of the Andes who sought to heap one summit upon another in order to dedicate a monument to liberty . . . and then was left helpless upon a shore, his laurels ungirt, seeing his most beautiful creation expiring in his arms and hearing in his agony the cry of scandal and the accusation of calumny! But twelve years passed, and the great judgment was opened. Colombia lives in her children—a noble lineage that shall not perish!—and with the voice of three republics proclaims and bears witness to the glory of her founder. Peru and Bolivia, in consternation and gratitude, acclaim him father and Liberator. His proud fatherland calls him to its bosom with triumphal honors; and republics and empires pay homage to his venerable ashes.

The honors to Bolívar declared by the representatives of the nation began a new era in Venezuela!

As early as 1833, when spirits were still astir with lively impressions of the latest events [and party feelings were at a high pitch], General Páez, then president, moved by a profound feeling of justice and zealous for the honor and glory of his fatherland, expressed to Congress in terms that ought not to be forgotten the duty that was incumbent on it to render public honors to the memory of Bolívar. . . .

[Yet] it was not natural, it was not possible for Congress to pay this debt so soon. It is the privilege of national assemblies, and the necessary condition of their existence, to make truths manifest through a process of doubt and contradiction, to resist authority, example, flattery, and menace, and only to yield, when finally convinced, to irresistible reason. It is also the privilege of great men to move society profoundly, to awaken all ambitions, and to challenge all vanities. The Congress of Venezuela made use of its privilege, and in its very midst Bolívar also made use of his. There was the great challenge: There during twelve years error, envy, and calumny successively came to nought; . . . there, finally, the voice of a people, by an incorruptible organ, proclaimed Bolívar strong and great! The silence of twelve years was nobly broken. One voice only was heard, there was only one thought: The honors to Bolívar are honors to the fatherland.

The decree that grants public honors to the memory of Bolívar bears the date of April 30, 1842. By it the order is given to transfer his remains to his fatherland, to receive them in a manner worthy of him and of the nation, to place his likeness in the halls of Congress and of the executive power, and to raise a mausoleum to him that will perpetuate the memory of this act of justice.

In its decree of May 12, the executive power invites the governments of New Granada and Ecuador to be present through their representatives at the exhumation of the venerable remains; names the Generals of Division Francisco R. Toro and Mariano Montilla and Dr. José María Vargas, on Venezuela's behalf, to witness the sad ceremony, to

receive the remains, and to transfer them to their native soil; and designates December 17 of the same year for the reception of the ashes in the capital of the state and for the funeral offices in it and in all the provincial capitals.

[The exhumation of the remains took place at Santa Marta on November 20, 1842, amid suitable pomp and circumstance. They were then taken on board the Venezuelan schooner *Constitución* for the trip to La Guaira, where they arrived on December 13. The landing was set for two days later.]

Already the remains of the eminent Son of Venezuela were reaching the native soil. Everything was prepared for the most solemn reception: Everything was to be majestic and grave, everything worthy of a people who know how to sense what is beautiful and admire what is great and heroic. Since the night before, the handsome illumination of the town as far as the wharf and the walls announced with its splendor the solemnity that was being prepared.

The pompous and lugubrious thunder of cannon greeted the dawn of this memorable day. . . . The temple, streets, wharf, long boats, seamen, everything was in mourning and adorned with the most excellent taste. The warships and merchant ships, the former to the east and the latter to the west of the landing place, raised their flags to half-mast. The militia was in formation; and the numerous gathering of spectators barely found room in the streets, windows, balconies, and housetops along the route.

At eight in the morning a large launch, sumptuously decorated, received the urn alongside the *Constitución* and headed for the wharf accompanied by four launches from the [French warship] *Circé* and two from the [British warship] *Albatross* with their commanders and officers, by twenty-seven skiffs of the merchant vessels with their captains, and by more than one hundred boats from the port, all with their flags at half-mast.

Nothing could be more picturesque, nothing more majestic than this floating procession that furrowed the waves in profound silence. One only heard the creaking of the oars and the murmur of the waters. . . .

The illustrious municipal council, placed in charge of the urn, had it disembarked as soon as they touched land; and the foreign and national officers took it on their shoulders in order to lay it upon the elegant litter that had been prepared there.

One individual deed, but of noble inspiration, served at that moment to give the general sentiment a higher pitch of tenderness and exaltation. Colonel Uslar,<sup>1</sup> who came from Valencia to render homage to the remains of his former chief, presented himself at the wharf with the same uniform in which he fought beside Bolívar at the famous action of Carabobo; and when he saw on land the urn containing the ashes, as he approached the remains of the man he admired, the most ardent and expressive tears bathed his severe countenance. A beautiful tribute that honors the one who receives it and honors the one who offers it!

The following day at six in the morning the population of La Guaira gave its last farewell to the remains of the Liberator [which had remained overnight in the parish church]. The militia and the authorities accompanied them to the gate of the city, and a commission of the municipal council from there to Caracas.

Let us leave the urn passing with a large retinue over the lofty crest of [Mount] Ávila,<sup>2</sup> whose rough and winding road had in many places been adorned with palms and arches by the mountain dwellers; and let us move to the capital, agitated to the utmost with the preparations for the reception.

More than 1000 artists and workmen employed by the government and private citizens were working incessantly to decorate the two temples [of La Trinidad and San Francisco] and the streets along the route, to raise the [triumphal] arch, to equip the carriage [that was to bear the

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<sup>1</sup> Juan Uslar, a German-born foreign legionary who settled permanently in Venezuela after taking part in the war of independence. [Ed.]

<sup>2</sup> The height that dominates the city of Caracas on its northern side, located between it and the coast. [Ed.]

urn], and to construct the stands and platforms. From all the provinces of the republic a multitude of persons were arriving who had no other object than to witness the funeral ceremonies; and from the neighboring towns a great part of the population had come beforehand to the capital. The desired moment was arriving, and excitement was at its peak.

The reception of the urn was announced for the 16th, and in the afternoon of that day all the population was concentrated in the space that lies between the chapel of La Trinidad and the city gate that leads to the La Guaira road. A commission of the municipal council, accompanied by a numerous following, went ahead a good part of the way to receive the remains. The latter arrived at the gates of the city at five in the afternoon, and the urn, taken on the shoulders of the most respectable citizens, was carried in procession toward the chapel of La Trinidad. The crowd stationed on the route was immense. The annals of Caracas record nothing that has ever produced so great a sensation nor moved such a numerous assemblage; but even more imposing than the number was the attitude of the people in this grave ceremony. . . . The people of Caracas were joyful in their sorrow as they saw the ashes of him whom they admired so often—strong like the lion, swift like the eagle—entering their native land with slow step and funeral trappings.

The entrance of the urn into the chapel was signaled by a general tolling of bells. There it was to pass the night, guarded by a numerous escort.

At sunrise on the 17th, cannon shots broke forth with the dawn; and the day was ushered in clear and calm to make this triumphal reception more brilliant and beautiful.

At nine the corporations began to arrive and take their positions around the chapel.

At ten there were already gathered the President of the Republic, all the members of the executive power, the archbishop with his high clergy and all the crosses of the parish, the diplomatic corps, all the authorities and public offi-

cials,<sup>3</sup> and the most numerous and elegant body of citizens that Caracas had ever seen.

The carriage, of great dimensions and majestic form, was placed beneath the triumphal arch awaiting the urn in order to set itself in motion.

At ten thirty the general tolling of bells announced the moment for the procession to begin its march. The urn was carried on shoulders the short distance from the chapel to the carriage, where it was placed.

This moment was imposing. . . . The rows of handsomely uniformed militiamen stretched out on one side and the other [of the appointed route] until lost from sight, and the sidewalks of the streets offered two dense columns, without interruption, of motionless, silent people, in the most grave and circumspect attitude. The windows, balconies, housetops, and stands, draped in mourning and crowned with tricolor banners, were occupied by thousands of spectators, principally by the ladies, dressed in strict mourning and adorned with their richest finery. Above all this towered the pyramids [which had been erected at intervals],<sup>4</sup> giving the picture a sublime and mysterious aspect, and alternating with them the black standards<sup>5</sup> that added something most religious and funereal.

The view was indescribable, and in vain art would try to copy it on canvas. What principally attracted the glances of the people was the carriage with its beautiful cenotaph enveloped in great black veils with silver stars, and its palls of purple velvet with gold arabesques, and its garlands, rosettes, and crowns of everlasting, and the great trophy, whose banners rising to a great height floated at the mercy of the wind as on a triumphal monument.

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<sup>3</sup> All these mentioned, from President to mere "public officials," were to accompany the funeral urn and carriage in procession through Caracas to the church of San Francisco. [Ed.]

<sup>4</sup> The pyramids "imitated marble," and each had "a brilliant group of tricolor banners" around its base. [Ed.]

<sup>5</sup> Suspended from high poles, these were "of black velvet with the monogram of Bolívar in the center crowned by silver laurels." [Ed.]

It was midday when the carriage reached the door of the temple [of San Francisco]. The urn, taken on their shoulders by generals, chiefs, and officers who disputed each other this honor, was carried [into the building] and placed on the catafalque. Those accompanying entered behind and took their places in the manner that we will say further on. First it is necessary to give a brief description of the temple.

[The "brief description" is too long and detailed to include here. Suffice it to say that the temple was adorned as befitted the solemn and magnificent requiem that was about to take place. After the service, the urn itself remained in San Francisco until December 23, when with "the same accompaniment, the same splendor" it was moved to Caracas cathedral. The cathedral became Bolívar's burial place for the immediate future, although today his tomb is located instead at Venezuela's national pantheon, also in Caracas.]

Felipe Larrazábal

## And the Lord Sent Bolívar

*The "romantic exaltation," as Germán Carrera Damas puts it, of the nineteenth century Venezuelan writer Felipe Larrazábal inevitably strikes the modern reader as somewhat ludicrous. Nevertheless, his life of Bolívar, which appeared in 1865 and thereafter went through numerous editions, was the first conscientiously documented, full-scale biographical study. For many years it was the standard work on its subject. From the standpoint of scholarship, it is actually a better work than one may infer from the following passages, which have been chosen to illustrate certain themes of providentialism and heroic virtue that became standard features of the Bolivarian literature. The same themes are present today in official and semipopular treatments of the Liberator, even though the language is now a little more restrained.*

### [*The Birth of Bolívar*]

In those times of obscurantism and oppression, God took from the treasures of his goodness a soul that He endowed

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Translated from Felipe Larrazábal, *La vida y correspondencia general del Libertador Simón Bolívar* (6th ed., 2 vols., New York, 1883), I, 3-5, xxviii-xxx.



with intelligence, justice, strength, and gentleness. "Go," He said, "carry light to the mansion of night; go make just and happy those who ignore justice and do not know liberty."

That soul was Bolívar's; this is the charge that Providence entrusted to him.

A noble and lofty spirit, humane, just, liberal, Bolívar in the virtues and talents of his person was one of the most gifted men the world has known; so perfect and unique, that in his goodness he was like Titus, in his good luck and successes Trajan, in his civility Marcus Aurelius, in his valor Caesar, in his wisdom and eloquence Augustus. Of great and very notable memory, unaffected and sociable with his friends, cultured and moderate in his pleasures, he knew how to join the gracefulness of the pen with the bravery of the sword. In danger he showed himself courageous, in toils strong, in adversity constant, in resolution ardent and of insurmountable integrity. Like Charlemagne, and better than Charlemagne, he had the skill to do great things with ease and difficult things quickly. Who ever conceived such vast plans? Who carried them out more smoothly? A sure and lively glance, a rapid intuition of things and of the moment, a prodigious spontaneity for improvising gigantic plans, the science of war reduced to a calculation of minutes, immense vigor of conception, and a fertile, creative, inexhaustible spirit . . . behold Bolívar. Victory in him was always inspiration. Skilled in war, unequaled in counsel, he was neither made proud by triumphs, nor broken by reverses, nor tempted by covetousness (the mortal poison of reason and truth), nor overcome by fatigue, nor stirred up by ambition. Light and perpetual honor of South America, and principally of Caracas his native land, the name of Bolívar will persist as long as the world endures!

If a large part of fortune is for a man to come in his epoch (for eminent individuals often depend on the times), we must confess that Bolívar came in the proper day. From the time he appeared on the grandiose scene of the South American revolution, he excited expectation and symbolized determination. Prompt in thinking as in doing,

he combined, as if once again in Caesar, the favors of nature and the splendors of art.

A great excellence, of an intense singularity, that excites the admiration and moves and captivates the will!

Simón Bolívar was born the 24th day of July of 1783.

In that same year, King Charles III of Spain, joined by the family pact with the sovereign of France, obliged England to recognize the independence of the colonies of North America. Who would have told him that the one who was to snatch away his colonies as well had just been born!

[*The Disinterestedness of the Liberator*]

If there has been a man in whom the passion to command would be excusable; if there was one in whose breast ambition, asleep or in suspense, could powerfully awaken, it was BOLIVAR! . . . To have opened the way for himself across the ruins of a powerful empire and to increase in virtue and in fortune until he touched the limit of greatness and of human glory; to liberate Venezuela, New Granada, and Ecuador, beginning his bold undertaking with 250 men; to pursue the Spaniards to beyond the Desaguadero in [Upper] Peru and conquer their armies in Junín and Ayacucho; these are exploits worthy of immortality, which, inspiring admiration, might also give pretexts for the burning love of power. More than 40,000 soldiers of Spain, directed by excellent leaders, backed by fortified places and ports and by the moral strength of 300 years of domination, occupied and defended these very rich and vast possessions. Bolívar with his talent and his constancy brought an army out of nothing and tore them away forever! . . . The peoples greeted him with the tender title of "Liberator," and millions of men entrusted him with their existence, their repose and liberty. Well then, that genius without rival, who knew how to conquer all obstacles and crown himself with laurels; that man who could boast of his work and grow dizzy with his own omnipotence had no ambition; he

never used his good fortune to increase his riches, nor did he allow his spirit to be perverted with the poison of vanity or of presumption. In all the periods of glory and prosperity for the republic, he renounced supreme command. Twenty years he served Colombia in the capacity of soldier and magistrate, and in that long period of time he reconquered the fatherland, freed three republics, conjured away many civil wars, and four times returned his omnipotence to the people, gathering together *spontaneously* four constituent congresses. BOLIVAR, then, destroyed the deceits of his enemies and overcame their black accusations with the ingenuousness of his conduct. Emulation has been unable to stain him and malice has been blinded by the brilliance of truth.

On a certain occasion, in Lima (1825), the Liberator was receiving the visit of his friends; and the conversation became more and more interesting with the recollection of the victories that from Carabobo to Ayacucho had given independence to South America. "I hope that history will take account of my name," Bolívar said, "because, in the end, it is something to have humbled the Lion of Castile from Caracas and the Caribbean Sea to the Andes of Peru. . . ." Those who were present, all enthusiasts for the Liberator, vied in admiring his dazzling career and finally fell to discussing the "necessity of Bolívar's remaining in command." Various were the reasons adduced to support this opinion, which the Liberator attacked saying that his aspiration had not been command, but to contribute to the freedom of America, whose grievous and cruel sacrifices could not be tolerated with indifference and calm.

When the party was ended, the Liberator entered his private room and wrote a most beautiful letter to his sister María Antonia, in Caracas. Abandoned to the intimacy of fraternal trust and speaking to her with his soul on his lips, he said: "*Next year I shall go there without fail, to live in retirement and in the delights of domestic quiet. Now America is free and I have no more to do. I loathe command, and the agitation of public life is detestable to me, now that the cause that put the sword in my hands has*

*disappeared. In Caracas, in Anauco<sup>1</sup> or any other point I shall live content."*

What words! What simple and sublime style! Now America is free and I have no more to do! . . . It resembles what Moses said: "And God finished His work and rested . . ." And that work was the heavens, and the earth, and all the adornment thereof!

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<sup>1</sup> The original Spanish text notes that this was the country house in the vicinity of Caracas, where Bolívar's friend, General Francisco Rodríguez del Toro, lived. [Ed.]

Alfonso Zawadzky C.

## Our Father, Liberator

*The late Father Alfonso Zawadzky was both an amateur historian and one of Colombia's most ardent Bolivarians. The following passage from an address that he delivered at Cali in July 1956 is ample proof that the "cult to Bolívar" is not limited to Venezuela. Though to the North American it may appear at first glance to be almost a parody, it represents in fact a completely sincere and earnest tribute.*

Our father, Liberator Simón Bolívar, who art in the heaven of American democracy: We wish to invoke your name. America has sinned many times against your ideals. The governments have sinned. The politicians have sinned. The writers have sinned. And we citizens have sinned by turning away from the path of right that your word traced for us. Your amphictyony of Panama, whose light shone in your thinking as a leader since before 1813, is the coagulation [sic] of your ideas to assure the liberty of the peoples of the continent. In the capital of the Isthmus the rulers of the republics<sup>1</sup> have caught the spirit of your message of salva-

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Translated from Alfonso Zawadzky C., *Colección de sus discursos, oraciones y conferencias en honor y recuerdo del Libertador*, as quoted in *Revista de la Sociedad Bolivariana de Venezuela*, no. 60 (October 28, 1959), pp. 449-450.

<sup>1</sup> A reference to the meeting of presidents of the American republics held at Panama in July 1956. [Ed.]

tion of 1826. You are the citizen who with your word, with your countenance, with your perseverance, and with your great patience taught a proper understanding of civility so that the REPUBLIC may prosper and democracy may not perish in the Fatherland that you created for us. Save us in this hour of AMERICA. Do not let the ship of RIGHT, which is our hope, be wrecked. And from your immortality send to us all a message of wisdom, of love for liberty and horror of destroying the ideal UNITY of the Fatherland. Father [and] Liberator: Hallowed and glorified be thy name.

Cristóbal L. Mendoza

## The Cult to the Liberator (II)

*Cristóbal L. Mendoza, who for many years served as president of the Sociedad Bolivariana de Venezuela, is an able representative of what may be called the Venezuelan historical "establishment." As such, and as a devoted admirer of the Liberator, he has looked with disfavor on the signs that Bolivarian fervor of the traditional variety is on the wane, at least among the younger generation of Venezuelan intellectuals. In the following address, which he delivered in April 1963, he argues that the "cult to the Liberator" is actually as valid and as timely as ever. It is obviously intended as a reply to the viewpoint expressed by Germán Carrera Damas (Document 10).*

With this final act of the ceremonies dedicated by the Bolivarian Society to the commemoration of its twenty-five years of labors as a national entity, one stage in the life of

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Translated and printed from Cristóbal L. Mendoza, *Temas de historia americana* (2 vols., Caracas, 1963-65), II, 132-137, with permission of the author.

the institution is concluded and another begins that is pregnant, like the former, with heavy responsibilities before the Venezuelan community. We shall, of course, continue and accentuate more each day the task of combating the errors and undoing the false imputations that malice and ignorance have accumulated against the actions of the founders of our independence and especially against those of the Liberator. And we must, moreover, place singular emphasis on the defense of the ideals proclaimed as cause and objective of the revolution of emancipation—ideals that were inspired by principles of permanent validity and for whose triumph those men gave life and fortune.

The moment that we live offers us the prospect of arduous struggles and commits us to greater and more sustained efforts: Materialism has in recent times intensified its campaign against those principles; thanks to the powerful arms that events today place in its hands, it has unleashed active propaganda to try to impose its ideology; war is made without quarter against all the manifestations of sentiment and spirit, whatever their nature may be; man is denied the right to think and act according to his own judgment; the concept of personal initiative is eliminated, and a harsh state organization is structured that absorbs activities of every sort and in whose midst the individual becomes only a gear of gigantic machinery. In the field of history there is proclaimed the uselessness of the legacy accumulated by peoples in their striving to achieve systems based on the free play of the attributes inherent in human personality; it is argued that the formulas that have served as the impulse to inspire present-day civilization are worn out, and an attempt is being made to replace them with new approaches.

Among us the attempt has a specific objective: to destroy the program of the emancipation movement, to discredit it as a product unsuited to the aspirations of the modern world or, at the least, to consider it as a transitory instrument to obtain independence that is now obsolete in the face of what are called "new currents," based on the denial of the prerogatives of the individual and on his blind submission to the omnipotent state. And it has, besides, a defi-



nite target: the person of the Liberator, whose prestige as the creator of nationalities inspired by precepts of justice and liberty is to be annihilated in order to extinguish fidelity to his doctrines in the mind of the Venezuelan people. It is held that around his figure, and for base purposes of egotistical domination, oligarchic groups or dictators thirsting for power and riches have formed an atmosphere of idolatry and have constructed an artificial contrivance that it is necessary to dismantle with the aim of establishing new concepts upon its ruins. The fame of Bolívar stands in the way of the consummation of this plan; his ideals are an obstacle; so the watchword is to dim the former and destroy the latter. Those anniversary pageants, those heated panegyrics, it is alleged, are antihistorical and contrary to the interests of the people, and they mean nothing but an expedient to distract the impatience of the masses or else the attempt of the adorers of the myth to wrap the person of Bolívar in a supernatural aura inaccessible to criticism.

The tendentious character of such pretensions, based on the prejudices of a sect that seeks to wipe away all relationship with the past or to accommodate it to preconceived theories, is perfectly evident. The problem of our cultural antecedents, the development of our historical process, our traditional features, do not count for anything. Hence loyalty to the doctrines of the father of his country, favorable comment on his philosophical concepts, and exaltation of his achievements are condemned as the effect of an anachronistic and prejudicial fanaticism. That strategy aims its darts particularly against all the initiatives of Bolivarian devotion, in which it is believed that there is suitable ground for censure in the light of the new philosophy. The cult to Bolívar, understandable when the latter was carrying out titanic efforts to overthrow the formidable framework of the colonial empire, today has no reason for being and should disappear, according to the advocates of the brand-new policy.

It is true that it is no longer a question of dragging the peoples behind an idol to conquer liberty on the fields of battle and that the military exploits of the Liberator and his

lieutenants represent a past stage in our annals, even though their glorious splendors continue to cast their reflection throughout the course of our life as a sovereign people. But at the present, and it is a matter of equal transcendence, we have to consolidate our national features and give unshakable stability to our democratic institutions, seeking within our own origins and in the bosom of our particular nature the principles and orientations that are to guide us toward the future. In reality, what is involved is another conquest no less important than the shaking off of colonial oppression: the final rooting in the collective conscience of the political-social philosophy whose practice will provide us with solid foundations to crown the work of national greatness initiated by the feat of emancipation.

This undertaking, which we have been striving to carry out amid the most bitter contrasts since the very birth of the republic, has been and will continue to be inspired by the creed of liberty, which the heroes of independence implanted after cruel sacrifices and which was incarnate in the person of the Liberator as its fittest representative—a creed that was not conceived for one generation, nor for one epoch, nor for one group. Centuries will pass without the vigor of his principles diminishing or the brilliance of his ideas, rooted in the depth of our historical process and strengthened by the advances of civilization, becoming dimmed. Bolívar condensed those ideas in postulates, which constitute a gospel for the definitive self-realization of the Hispanic American peoples. When he spoke of the political system that would have to be established in the country to make it a community of true citizens, he confirmed the aims of the revolution in irrevocable manner, proclaiming that “Venezuela had, has, and should have a republican government” and that “its principles should be the sovereignty of the people, division of powers, civil liberty, proscription of slavery, and the abolition of monarchy and privileges.”

In describing the confusion that reigned as a result of the tendencies toward anarchy and in condemning every prejudice of race or position, the Liberator magnifies his stature as a reformer of traditional habits and points straight to the

final goal of the transformation in a language that reveals the genius of his vision. It would be impossible in a few pages to present even a synthetic exegesis of that fecund ideology, sum and compendium of the aspirations of Hispanic America. But the eloquence of [his statements] is enough to justify devotion to the doctrines of the Liberator and the gratitude that is professed to his memory. Is it perchance antihistorical to remember those doctrines as reason and basis of our existence and to encourage such gratitude for the edification of present and future generations and as a just tribute to his exceptional merits? In the negative reply to this question is contained the profound reason for being of the cult to the Liberator, which is dedicated to weighing the extent and significance of his work as the axis of the transformation of the Hispanic American world and the decisive guide in its march toward the future.

Thus conceived and practiced, the cult to the Liberator does not obey blind impulses nor allow itself to be distorted for the purpose of forging an invulnerable myth; it assumes, on the contrary, a profound historical transcendence and is an expression of the most wholesome and praiseworthy patriotism. It is not a sterile oblation to his person, nor vain pride in an illustrious origin, nor a paralysis of the will resigned to be satisfied with past glories, but a current and living force. . . . The cult to the Liberator is not fetishist nor idolatrous and neither does it tend to develop frenzied nationalisms in the name of higher concepts. It studies the historical fact of emancipation, investigates its causes and motives, analyzes its tendencies in the light of the characteristics of the national community, and examines its political-social philosophy in order to present . . . the picture of the transformation of Hispanic America. And if it places the figure of Bolívar in the center, it is because he was the chief artisan of the renovating effort.

Because of its very historical validity, that cult to the Liberator has in the course of years acquired the universal extension that is worthy of the world-wide repercussion of the event inspiring it and of the greatness of the personage who fully interpreted its content and consequences. Stimu-

lated by the transcendence of the emancipation movement and deeply impressed by the exceptional virtues of the eponymous leader, the highest thinkers of America and many from other parts of the earth have added their voices to the homage and ennobled its scope in pages brimming with immortal concepts. Those great thinkers are, in reality, like standard-bearers of the numerous legion of writers of different countries concerned for the future of the continent who have seen in that work and in the action of its leader the expression of the aspirations of our peoples and the firmest pledge of triumph.

In speaking of that cult, and at the risk of incurring the anathema of those who, with equivocal intent, invoke the severity of historical precepts, one cannot forget the fruits of poetic inspiration that overflow in lyrical songs, inflame sensibility, and by the most noble route of sentiment enlighten public spirit and give wings to affection and admiration for the father of his country. Besides, who has said that poetry is in conflict with history and is unsuited to express its truths in the harmonious language of verse that fixes them in the soul? Was not that, perchance, the favorite form of the ancient cultures for writing their annals and telling the old myths, from which they sprang? And is it not in the songs of their bards that modern nations keep the treasure of the exploits that signalized their rise to greatness? Those songs enclose the heartbeat of the community, express its ideas, and with the brilliance and emotion of their images recreate heroic actions and the figures of the men who performed them in the rhythm of poetic forms. Why, then, should we disdain that lyrical aspect of the cult to the Liberator, which constitutes a precious resource for the understanding of his life? Happy are the nations whose cradle has had minstrels to make their glory and the deeds of their progenitors last forever!

That is what the cult to the Liberator is and signifies: adherence to the creed of the revolution of emancipation, whose political-social philosophy preserves its pristine validity and constitutes the guarantee of the free development of the Hispanic American peoples as sovereign entities not subject to foreign vasallages, and conscious veneration for

the memory of the man whose thought and whose sword gave life and shape to the motives and aims of the transformation and attained for himself, with universal assent, the glorious recompense that in his own view was superior to any that human pride could receive: the title of Liberator.

H. L. V. Ducoudray-Holstein

## Bolívar, Miss Pepa, and a Battle at Sea

*The literature of "Bolivarian detraction," as it is called in Venezuela, has a history that is just as long, if not as respectable, as that of the Bolivarian cult itself. It is not as extensive, but it nevertheless constitutes a cult (or "anticult") in its own right; and it, too, has a number of favorite themes that have been repeated with minor variations from the time of independence to the present. Among its original sources are the writings of certain foreigners whose association with Bolívar left them for one reason or another embittered and disillusioned, of whom the most important—and most vitriolic—was General H. La Fayette Villaume Ducoudray-Holstein, a former Napoleonic officer who served with the patriots in New Granada and Venezuela. To this hostile observer, Bolívar's "dominant traits" were "ambition, vanity, thirst for absolute, undivided power, and profound dissimulation." Almost alone among Bolívar's detractors, he accused him even of cowardice; and he attributed the Liberator's success essentially to the*

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Reprinted from H. L. V. Ducoudray-Holstein, *Memoirs of Simón Bolívar, President Liberator of the Republic of Colombia; and of His Principal Generals; Secret History of the Revolution, and the Events Which Preceded It, from 1807 to the Present Time* (Boston, 1829), pp. 140-147.

fact that he was "more cunning . . . than the mass of his countrymen."<sup>1</sup> The fact that Ducoudray-Holstein failed to receive from Bolívar the rank and responsibility that he felt he deserved undoubtedly did much to color his statements, which can scarcely be accepted as objective truth, but his eyewitness testimony can sometimes be valuable—if handled with extreme care and with all necessary allowances. It has, in any case, been lavishly employed by writers since that time who have sought to present the Liberator in an unfavorable light. The following excerpts, which refer to Bolívar's behavior on the expedition that left Aux Cayes in Haiti for Venezuela early in 1816, provide an excellent though somewhat extreme example, portraying the Liberator as a cynically irresponsible chieftain mainly concerned with his own pleasure and safety. It is perhaps worth noting that they are also quoted at length in the more recent unflattering biography of Bolívar by Salvador de Madariaga, although the latter does observe in the Liberator's defense that he was basically a landsman and thus not to be seen at his best on shipboard.<sup>2</sup>

Louis Brion,<sup>3</sup> promoted to the rank of post captain, did more than any of us to fit out the squadron in a proper way. He was named commander of the navy, and employed his great credit and the remainder of his large fortune, to enable us to depart from Aux Cayes on April 10, 1816.

But scarcely had we arrived at the island of San [*sic*] Beata, when the whole squadron was detained by—a woman; it was no other than Miss Pepa M—— (the Span-

<sup>1</sup> Ducoudray-Holstein, *Memoirs of Simón Bolívar*, p. 326.

<sup>2</sup> Salvador de Madariaga, *Bolívar* (London and New York, 1952), p. 276.

<sup>3</sup> Luis Brión, to use the Spanish form of his name, was a wealthy trader of Curaçao who placed both his talents and his resources at the service of the South American patriots; he was a particularly close collaborator of Bolívar. [Ed.]

ish name of Josephine), the dear mistress of general Bolívar. She alone, by her secret virtues, had the power to detain the whole squadron and about a thousand men, during more than forty-eight hours, at anchor!

The following particulars will explain this curious and notorious fact. General Bolívar is, like all his countrymen the Caraguins [i.e., *caraqueños*], greatly attached to the fair sex and has usually with him, one, two, and more mistresses in his retinue, besides those whom he takes a fancy to in passing from one place to another. These amours last ordinarily twenty-four hours or a week; but Miss Pepa made a rare exception to the General's customary habits. . . .

As soon as he was named commander in chief, by the assembly held at Aux Cayes, he wrote to Miss Pepa, who resided with her mother and sister at St. Thomas, to come and join him without delay. He expected them daily with great anxiety, and detained the departure of our expedition, from one day to another, during more than six days. At last commodore Brion, growing impatient, declared to him frankly, that it was high time to embark and that he would not and could not wait any longer. Bolívar, therefore, was obliged to sail without his mistress, and we departed. Before we arrived at the island of La Beata, some leagues from Aux Cayes, a fast-sailing pilot boat brought the lucky tidings to general Bolívar, that his dear Miss Pepa, mother and sister, had arrived from St. Thomas at Aux Cayes. This letter caused a bustle on board the whole squadron. Bolívar immediately took commodore Brion, . . . down into the cabin, where they remained a long time talking together. Brion was strongly opposed to waiting the arrival of Miss Pepa, . . . but the entreaties of general Bolívar prevailed at last, and he consented to wait. The complaisant Páez,<sup>4</sup> Anzoatiqui [i.e., José Antonio Anzoátegui], and [Carlos] Soublotte, made a formal toilette, put themselves in uniform, and sailed in the fast sailing armed schooner, the *Constitution*, back to Aux Cayes, in search of the dear Miss Pepa. They were rewarded for their readiness to com-

<sup>4</sup> This Páez, who was an aide-de-camp of General Bolívar, must not be confounded with General Páez, of the *llaneros*. They are not at all related or connected.



ply with the desires of their master; Anzoatiqui was promoted to the rank of lieutenant colonel, commander of the body guard of general Bolívar, and Soublotte, adjutant general colonel, attached to the staff.

The majority of the officers composing this *expeditionary army* [were] very much dissatisfied with being under the control of such circumstances, when activity and bravery alone, and not a woman, could save the country. From that time Bolívar sunk very much in my opinion, and that of others.<sup>5</sup>

The composition of that *expeditionary army*, which took afterwards the title of *liberating army*, was as follows: There were six generals, nine colonels, forty-seven lieutenant colonels, a chief of the staff, three adjutant generals colonels, and eighteen officers of the staff; one commandant of the artillery, one intendant general, one secretary general of the intendancy, and a good number of the administration of the army; one commandant general of the cavalry, without taking into the account that each general had his aides-de-camp, a secretary, servants, and many their mistresses or wives; that each adjutant general and each colonel had his adjutant; that the number of majors, captains, and lieutenants amounted to about five hundred and that we had for these epaulets not fifty soldiers. Each lady had either her mother, sisters, or some other friend male or female, servants, and a good deal of baggage, which embarrassed greatly the maneuvering of the vessels. There were besides a number of families, emigrants from Venezuela, who embarked at Aux Cayes in spite of the en-

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<sup>5</sup> The modern Venezuelan authority on Bolívar's military career, Vicente Lecuna, insisted that there really was no delay. He claimed that the ships left Aux Cayes as they were ready, then simply waited off Beata until the rest of the expedition caught up; thus the fact that Miss Pepa also caught up was incidental. See his *Catálogo de errores y calumnias en la historia de Bolívar* (3 vols., New York, 1956-1958), II, 4. As for Ducoudray-Holstein's version of the naval encounter described below, Lecuna did not consider it even worthy of detailed rebuttal. [Ed.]

treaties of commodore Brion, . . . Miss Pepa arrived at last, on the third day, from Aux Cayes, where the *Constitution* was obliged to remain a whole day, this belle being not prepared to embark. Bolívar made his toilette in a superb style and left our vessel to pay his visit on board the *Constitution*, where he remained the whole day and night, and came the next morning on board the commodore, who was, as well as myself and the other officers, highly displeased at having lost about four days at anchor.

On the morning of May 2, the squadron being not far distant from the three elevated rocks, known by the name of the Three Monks (*Los Tres Frailes*) not far from the island of Margarita, two Spanish men of war, a large brig, and a schooner were signalized. As our squadron had no colors at all, Brion ordered the Spanish flag to be hoisted on board of each of our vessels, so that the enemy, believing it was his long-expected squadron, took in sail and waited for us. But as soon as they perceived their mistake, the captain of the schooner, which was a fine and fast sailing vessel, pressed sail and left his commander, whose brig sailed not so well. Both tried to escape, but too late. Brion changed his colors and fired upon them. The brig was soon overtaken by our brig, a fine and large vessel, armed with eight carronades and a brass 24-pound swivel. Three fast sailing schooners were detached from the squadron in chase of the Spanish schooner, which was taken some hours afterwards. . . . The royal brig was the *Intrépido*, with 14 pieces of eight, and 150 men, sailors and troops, commanded by the brigadier *Don Rafael Iglesias*, who was wounded and then killed by our men, who took the vessel by boarding. They entered the cabin with drawn swords while the surgeon was dressing his wound, and killed him; the surgeon attempted to appease them and was murdered too. Such was the horrid character of this barbarous war.

Commodore Brion, who fought bravely, received a wound that was, fortunately, of no dangerous consequence, and was promoted, after the action, to the rank of admiral of the republic of Venezuela.

But how did general Bolívar behave in this pretty hot and close action, which lasted more than four hours? As soon as he heard that Brion had ordered the necessary preparations for attack, he took me aside and spoke as follows: "But, my friend, do you not think that the Spaniards will resist and fight to the last." "To be sure they will," replied I laughing. "Well, but do you think that our schooner is strong enough to fight alone against these two strong vessels (at the same time looking at them through a spy glass). We are too distant and too far in advance, which renders it impossible for the remainder of our squadron to support us in the action." "That is true (said I), but we will take them by boarding; this is the customary way to force Spanish vessels." "What? by boarding, do you think of such folly?" (*y pensez vous mon cher Ami? c'est une folie!*) These were the very expressions of general Bolívar to me! "But what is it best for me to do? do you not think that if I were wounded, or killed, our expedition would be totally lost; and Brion, the poor Brion, would have expended in vain, all his fortune!" I looked up astonished; it first occurred to me that he might be jesting; but when I saw that these strange questions were put to me in earnest, I understood him, called Brion and said: "General Bolívar has made me a just observation concerning you, he said that he being wounded or killed in the action, you Brion, would lose all your advances, as then the expedition would, of course, be disbanded." "Oh the d——d coward," said Brion to me in Dutch (he was a native Dutchman). "Well general (turning to Bolívar), you will be safely placed with the intendant [Francisco Antonio] Zea, to whom I have assigned a place in our cabin . . . at the entry of the powder magazine, to hand the necessary cartridges." As Brion said these words in an angry manner, Bolívar asked him: "But my dear Brion, do you not think that Ducoudray's observation is just, do you not think so?" "Oh yes, yes," said Brion, and turned round. I was giving the necessary orders to our officers to arm with muskets and cartridges, when Bolívar came hastily and took me by the arm, saying: "Now I have found an excellent place, better than to

be down in the cabin with old Zea, . . ." He showed me the longboat that, in armed vessels, is generally fixed over the cabin windows. He jumped in, called García, (his intend-ant), ordered his pistols, and sword, and told him to load two balls in each pistol, which García did in my presence, and looking at me and laughing. This position that Bolívar chose for himself was surely the safest place in the vessel, then in setting as he did in the longboat, his head and whole body was safely protected by the thickness and strength of the beam that supports the rudder of the vessel.

We suffered much during the very warm action, from the musket fire of about a hundred men of the Spanish regiment La Corona, who fired from the rigging [of the Spanish brig] into our vessel and wounded and killed about fifty of our officers and men. We stood more than an hour at half pistol-shot distance from the brig before we could fix the grapples for boarding. When the crew saw about a dozen of us on their deck, the battle began to be renewed with more fury; but when our number increased and their brave commander felt himself to be mortally wounded, they lost all hopes; and about thirty of them stripped off their clothes and jumped overboard, in hopes to save their lives by swimming to the Three Rocks, which lay a gunshot distance from us.

At this moment, general Bolívar, having all this time been sitting very safe behind his beam in the longboat, perceived these naked unfortunate men swimming at a very short distance from him; he took his pistol and killed one of them, took the second, fired at, but missed another!

When all was over, and the brig was taken, he jumped out of his boat, came with a radiant face to me and said, "My dear friend, you fought bravely, but I too have not been inactive; I killed my man but unfortunately missed the second!" I, who passed several times from one side of the vessel to the other, always seeing my commander leaning his head close to the beam, was surprised and asked him how he could kill a man in his boat? "Ah," said he, laughing, "with my pistol, in the water!" Such was Bolívar, in the action of May 2, 1816.

Bolívar . . . during about a month of our being in the same vessel, and very intimate, never asked me a single question on military tactics or any thing concerning our art. His great employment was to play backgammon with me, or with Brion or Zea, to walk up and down on deck and talk on very common topics with one or another of his officers, or to sleep. I saw him—in about a month's time, three times reading in a book; and when he did, it was the first one he found in our cabin—and this not half an hour at a time. His favorite topics were, with me and Brion, to speak of his stay in Paris, to give us detailed particulars of his good fortune in this capital, and sometimes he asked me many questions about Napoleon, the dresses of the ladies and gentlemen at court, and what kind of ceremonies were necessary to be presented, etc.; another time, about his mustachios, and those of the officers, the modes of dress and uniforms in the French and English armies, but never could I speak a single word about military tactics, drills, etc. He stopped me immediately, saying, "Oh yes, yes, *mon cher ami*, I know that, I know that book is very well written, but tell me"—and then he asked me a very insignificant question on absolutely indifferent trifles, which gave another turn to our conversation.

José de San Martín (?)

## The "Lafond Letter"

*Those writers who have ascribed to the Argentine liberator José de San Martín a higher degree of moral grandeur than to Bolívar have normally cited as one of their most convincing proofs a letter that San Martín allegedly wrote to Bolívar after his return to Lima from the Guayaquil interview. It records his offer to serve under Bolívar's command in order to complete the destruction of royalist power in Peru—an offer that Bolívar rejected, apparently because he wished all the glory of liberating Peru for himself. The original of the letter has never come to light. It was first published in 1844, in a work by the French traveler Gabriel Lafond de Lurcy. Most Venezuelan historians today insist that it is a fabrication, basing their opinion both on certain textual details and on what they consider the fundamental implausibility of the document as a whole. Most Argentine—and many non-Latin American—historians accept the letter as a genuine copy of a lost original. This is not the place to examine the controversy, which has already received disproportionate attention in the literature on Spanish American independence. But the letter itself must be included if only because it has*

*become a key exhibit in the hands of Bolívar's detractors. For that matter, some of his admirers also accept the letter as genuine and have managed to reconcile it with a continuing belief in his greatness.*

Lima, August 29, 1822

To His Excellency the Liberator of Colombia, SIMÓN BOLÍVAR.

DEAR GENERAL:

I told you in my last letter of the 23rd instant that I had reassumed the supreme command of this republic, with the sole aim of taking it away from the weak and inept [Marquis of] Torre Tagle. The difficulties that surrounded me at that moment did not permit me to write you at the length that I desire. I shall do it today, not only with the frankness that is a part of my character but also with that which the great interests of America demand.

The results of our interview have not answered my hopes for the prompt termination of the war. Unfortunately, I am intimately convinced that you did not believe sincere the offer that I made to serve under your orders with the forces at my disposition or that my person could be an embarrassment to you. The reasons for your refusal were that your delicacy would never allow you to give me orders and that even if you should decide to do so, the Congress of Colombia would not authorize your departure from the territory of the republic. Permit me, General, to tell you that these reasons have not appeared very plausible to me. The first refutes itself; and as for the second, I am persuaded that if you indicated the desire [to leave] to the Congress, it would respond with unanimous approval, since it is a question of finishing the struggle in which we are engaged in this campaign, with the cooperation of yourself and that of your army, and since the honor of putting an end to it will redound upon you and upon the republic.

Do not delude yourself, General; the data that you have on the royalist forces are mistaken. In Upper and Lower Peru they amount to more than 19,000 war-hardened

troops of the line, and two months would be enough to bring them together. The patriot army, decimated by diseases, cannot place in line of battle more than 8,500 men, who for the most part are only recruits. The division of General Santa Cruz, whose casualties have not been replaced in spite of his demands (according to what this general writes me), must have experienced a considerable loss of men in the long and painful march that it has had to make by land and will be unable to be of any service in this campaign.<sup>1</sup> The 1,400 Colombians that you are sending will be necessary to maintain the fortresses of Callao and order in Lima. Consequently, without the support of the army you command, the expedition that is being prepared by way of the intermediate ports<sup>2</sup> will be unable to attain the great advantages that might be hoped for if powerful forces were to call the enemy's attention elsewhere; and the struggle will continue for an indefinite time. I say indefinite, because I am intimately convinced that, whatever may be the vicissitudes of the present war, *the independence of America is irrevocable*; but the prolongation of the war will cause the ruin of her peoples, and it is the sacred duty of the men to whom her destinies are entrusted to avoid such great evils.

Finally, General, my decision is irrevocably taken. I have convoked the first Congress of Peru for the coming September 20; and on the day following its installation I shall embark for Chile, convinced that my presence *is the only obstacle* that prevents you from coming to Peru with the army you command. Supreme happiness for me would have been to finish the war of independence under the

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<sup>1</sup> Andrés Santa Cruz was the commander of a Peruvian detachment that assisted in the liberation of Quito; the march referred to was its return trip from Quito to Guayaquil, before embarking for Peru. Contrary to what the letter suggests, a considerable number of Colombian troops were in fact assigned to it, as replacements for the losses suffered. [Ed.]

<sup>2</sup> These ports—called in Spanish the [*Puertos*] *Intermedios*—were the ones between Nazca and Iquique, in effect comprising the Peruvian coast south of Lima. The operation in question was designed to invade the highlands from that coast; it failed. [Ed.]



orders of a general to whom South America owes her liberty. Fate orders otherwise, and I must resign myself.

I do not doubt that after my departure from Peru the government that will be established there will call for your active cooperation, and I think that you will not refuse so just a demand. Before leaving, I shall send you a note on all the leaders, so that you may have some useful knowledge of their military and private conduct.

General Arenales will remain in command of the Argentine forces; his probity, his courage, his knowledge will deserve your esteem and your consideration.

I shall say nothing to you about the uniting of Guayaquil to the Republic of Colombia. Permit me only the thought, General, that it was not for us to decide this important affair. In settling it by a common agreement when the war was finished, our respective governments would have avoided the dangers that a premature decision could cause for the interests of the new states of South America.

I have spoken to you, General, with frankness; but the sentiments expressed in this letter will remain buried in the most profound silence. If they were to become known, the enemies of our liberty might succeed in taking advantage of them to attack it, and intriguing and ambitious men to foment the poison of discord.

Commander Delgado, the bearer of this letter, will bring you on my behalf a hunting rifle, a pair of pistols, and the pacer that I offered you in Guayaquil. Accept, General, this remembrance from the first of your admirers, with the expression of my regards and of my sincere desire that *you may have the glory of ending the war* of independence of South America. I remain your affectionate servant.

JOSÉ DE SAN MARTÍN

Francisco de Paula  
Santander

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## Bolívar as the Victim of His Own Success

*In the closing years of Bolívar's life, the most eminent of his critics was his erstwhile collaborator Francisco de Paula Santander. The latter avoided the cruder forms of personal diatribe, preferring instead a tone of injured republicanism and self-righteous defense of his own actions. But the view that he shared with most other Colombian liberals of the period—that the Liberator's "head was turned" by a surfeit of glory and honor, to the extent that he betrayed the very principles for which he had fought—has won a secure niche in the anti-Bolivarian literature. Indeed traces of it can be found even in some otherwise sympathetic interpretations of Bolívar. It is clearly set forth in the following excerpts from a tract that Santander composed in 1829 at the height of Bolívar's final dictatorship. Though Santander paints a one-sided picture of that regime, his charges contain a large measure of truth; the dictatorship has usually been defended, if at all, only as a necessary evil.*

[In 1821] Bolívar, rewarded with the presidency of the republic and at the front of the liberators of the fatherland, and Santander at the head of the government, favored with the intimate friendship of the President, surrounded by upright and enlightened advisers, and aided by the wisdom of the deputies of the people, promised Colombia a tranquil independence, an inalterable freedom, quietude, culture, enlightenment, happiness, and prosperity.

This expectation was so well founded that in the first five years of the government of Santander the republic made very considerable advances, which could not do less than excite the admiration of foreign countries. Bolívar was the first who recognized and admitted it, and both in his private letters to the Vice-President and in his official notes he did not tire of manifesting his admiration and his appreciation. If this was so with respect to public affairs, one must suppose that no change occurred in their relations of friendship, even though Bolívar showed himself annoyed that Santander had not immediately sent to Trujillo in Peru all the assistance in troops, arms, and munitions that he asked for in 1824.

This displeasure ended very quickly, as soon as Bolívar persuaded himself that with Congress not in session, and having already sent to Peru the contingent indicated in the Treaty of Lima,<sup>1</sup> the government could not by its own authority dispose of a single soldier or gun to transfer and use them in another country. The resistance of Santander was based on the principles of the representative system, on the constitutional laws of the republic, and on the danger that at some [future] time the government might dispose freely of the resources of the state. Thus Bolívar understood it; and besides he must have convinced himself that Santander would never sacrifice the duties of his magistracy to the obligations of friendship and gratitude.

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<sup>1</sup> There were two Treaties of Lima signed by Peru and Colombia in 1822. Neither provided for a specific contingent to be sent from Colombia to Peru, although both provided for close Peruvian-Colombian cooperation. The initial detachments from Colombia to Peru were actually sent on the personal authority of Bolívar, before his own departure. [Ed.]

The conduct of Bolívar in the South<sup>2</sup> and in Peru until shortly after the battle of Ayacucho; the eminently liberal and republican letters that he wrote to Santander; his patriotic resignation of the presidency, addressed to Congress after the liberation of the departments of the South; his official note to the same Congress, dated in Tulcán December 31, 1822, in which he promised to sustain the inviolability of the Constitution at the head of the army, basing so laudable an intent, as he expressed it, on the doctrines of the constitutional apostle of the day and of the world's first republican;<sup>3</sup> his repeated protests to abandon the reins of government in order to retire to enjoy the pleasures of private life; his speeches, his proclamations, everything, everything kept far from Colombian hearts the suspicion that Bolívar would sometime be disloyal to his duties, to the sacredness of his promises, and would snatch away the authority of the people in order to exercise simultaneously and without measure or restriction the executive, legislative, and judicial powers.

Some patriots attribute the change in Bolívar's political ideas to his going to Peru, for which Congress imparted its legal permission, and go so far as to lament the hour in which he was given such approval. The triumphs attained in that country, the almost divine honors that were lavished upon him in Upper and Lower Peru, the disproportionate eulogies with which we Colombians praised his exploits, and the perfidious advice of some treacherous patriots, they say, turned his head and made him conceive the project of dominating all the new states of South America, at the expense of their liberties and also of their independence. We, without attempting to investigate whether this project was fermenting even earlier in Bolívar's head or whether he conceived it in Peru, venture to affirm that it was not precisely his going to Peru that produced the transformation we lament but the unnecessary prolongation of his residence in Lima after the battle of Ayacucho. . . . Let us

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<sup>2</sup> i.e., the southern part of Colombia, now Ecuador. [Ed.]

<sup>3</sup> Respectively, Benjamin Constant and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. [Ed.]

forgive the Peruvians for having thrown themselves into the hands of a new dictatorship when not one Spanish enemy remained within their territory. The rapture of their grateful hearts, the prestige of the conqueror, and the artful conduct with which the latter knew how to lull patriotic vigilance, must have done their work without hindrance on that occasion; but how can we excuse the Congress of Bogotá for . . . not having called him decisively in 1825 and 1826, when the questions of the constitutional elections were beginning to agitate Colombia? It may be that the harm that was assailing her would not have been warded off because Bolívar would have refused to come to his fatherland, clothing his negative in as many reasons as his fecund genius supplied him. However, today we would not be lamenting with remorse the omission of such a step. Be that as it may, it is evident for us that the disagreement of Bolívar and Santander had its origin in Peru and that from there was cast the apple of discord which not only was to end their friendship but divide Colombia, Bolivia, and Peru itself.

Let us say it for once and all: The project of a constitution that Bolívar worked out for the new Republic of Bolivia has been the origin of the disagreements with Santander and of the scandalous disorders that took place in Colombia in the years 1826 and 1827. However much the new legislator accompanied his constitution with a brilliant address adorned with all the beauties that his genius suggested, reflective men could not close their eyes to the political principles it contained nor to the palpable contradictions that there were between its dispositions and the mentioned address.

They noted that between the Bolivian constitution and a monarchical constitution there existed no real difference other than the change of words, because a life president, without any responsibility and with the right to name his successor and to dismiss him, was more powerful than a monarch of England or of France. They observed that even though in the address it was asserted that the President of Bolivia had his hands tied to do evil and was rendered headless to think of usurpations, the Constitution conferred on

him an extensive authority over all the branches of administration, with the prerogative of not incurring responsibility. They noticed that the composition of the legislative body introduced a novelty that had escaped the wisdom of experienced nations and that partaking of the system of censors and tribunes of Athens and Rome, together with the functions of modern constitutions, it formed a monster that must disturb public order. They found in that code an electoral power, almost democratic in its numbers, to which were attributed faculties that could serve only to entangle the administration and to prevent the people, dazzled with those faculties, from perceiving the effective loss of its liberties. They saw some individual rights guaranteed there alongside a great executive power, which, parapeted behind irresponsibility and perpetual duration, must seize and absorb everything, making use of promises, hopes, and terror. They considered, finally, that so complicated and absurd a system had to keep the state in continual agitation and engender the spirit of insurrection as the only remedy for containing the President or driving him from his post.

These dispositions, and many others that it would be burdensome to examine, caused suspicions of Bolívar's intentions to be conceived, and engendered the idea that the legislator of Bolivia was no longer that legislator of Guayana<sup>4</sup> who paid so many tributes to the liberty of the people and knew how to inspire such distrust of authority that was conferred for a long time, and with little responsibility, to a single person. Santander had to share in these fears; but he did not venture to reveal them, both because he did not wish to be the first to stain the reputation of the Liberator of Colombia and because it was very hard for him to make room for such suspicions, driving from his heart all the proofs to the contrary that he had seen before, and finally because that constitution was for the Bolivian people and it was to be presumed that the peculiar circumstances of the latter urgently required it to be thus.

But these illusions steadily disappeared as it was seen

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<sup>4</sup> The reference is to Bolívar's Angostura Address, since Angostura was located in the province of Guayana. [Ed.]

that Bolívar [both before and after his return from Peru gave open encouragement to all those who were seeking illegally to undermine the Colombian constitutional regime].

One then saw the constitutional government of the republic painted with the same black colors as was the Directory of France by those who had an interest in justifying the usurpation of Bonaparte. There was no vice with which the government was not infected: All the evils that the nature of societies, the infancy of a state, war, ignorance, or other necessary causes produce were attributed to the constitution, to the laws, and to the government. Reform was preached as indispensable. Bolívar and his constitution were the only anchors of salvation, and he who denied or doubted it was denigrated with the epithets of ingrate, perfidious, thief of the loan,<sup>5</sup> and enemy of the Liberator. Under such auspices, would it have been possible to reestablish friendship between the two magistrates or even to preserve an apparent good harmony? By no means.

[The culmination has been that] a Colombian, availing himself of the favor of fortune and profaning the glorious title of Liberator, destroys the constitution of his fatherland by sordid means, has supreme absolute authority conferred on himself, and orders and disposes of the Colombians as if he were disposing of his own patrimony. We say it with the bitterest sorrow: The present political regime of Colombia is the ignominy of the nineteenth century and the dishonor of the republic. A president invested with all powers has in his hands the fate of a people worthy by its sacrifices and its docility of a paternal government founded upon the wise maxims of political law; a council of state composed of an

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<sup>5</sup> The loan in question was raised by Colombia in London in 1824, for a face amount of £4,750,000, although net receipts were substantially less. The rapid exhaustion of the loan funds was repeatedly used by the Bolivarian party to attack Santander and his associates, who were accused of liberally lining their pockets with the proceeds. The charge of theft seems to have been generally or largely unfounded; mismanagement clearly did occur. [Ed.]

excessive number of partisans of absolute power takes the place of the divan in Constantinople; the tribunals and judges, owing their positions to the government, . . . must be quick to please the wishes of the dictator; the profusely favored and protected armed force sharpens its bayonets in order to plunge them into anyone who speaks of rights and guarantees; the virtuous patriots, who have lent so many services to their fatherland, groan in prisons or exiles to which they have been condemned without prior judgment, in hatred for their political opinions. Their families, abandoned to indigence, weep and cry for their freedom, without being heeded. The convents and monasteries are repopulated with friars and nuns, by virtue of the abolition of the beneficent laws that limited their admission.<sup>6</sup> The natives are again reduced to the burden of the ignominious tribute that their pitiless conquerors imposed upon them. Education and public instruction have retrogressed to the dark times of Spanish domination, by means of the reforms which have been decreed against the vast and liberal plan of studies that so greatly honored Colombia. The colleges and university of Bogotá have been converted into barracks. State monopolies, sales taxes, prohibitory laws, and privileges have been reborn. The laws that reminded the military of their condition as soldiers of a republic are abolished. . . . The departments and provinces, governed with extraordinary faculties by the satellites of absolute power, suffer the vexations of Roman proconsuls. The press, condemned to silence, cannot denounce the errors of the administration, nor make public the sentiments of the people: It serves merely to publish periodicals devoted to the dictator, in which are found long columns replete with adulation of their idol and insults against the constitutional system. A severe police, whose errors and arbitrary acts are tolerated and even applauded, has annihilated the pleasures of society. . . . The funds destined for public credit are invested in troops and in the Peruvian war. Denunciations

<sup>6</sup> In addition to lifting the ban on smaller convents ordered by the Congress of Cúcuta in 1821, Bolívar suspended a later measure that set twenty-five as the minimum age for taking vows in religious orders. [Ed.]



and espionage, converted into meritorious acts of patriotism, spread distrust and fear everywhere.

Bolívar has more than enough talent, ingenuity, moral courage, and perseverance. No undertaking appears impossible to him; no setback frightens his spirit. He is something of a fatalist: He believes blindly that certain days, certain places, and certain circumstances are contrary or favorable to him. In his friendships and in his hatreds he touches the extremes. No friend of his has defects; none of his enemies has virtues. To recompense a friend, or take vengeance on an enemy, he does not stop at any means, however unjust and immoral they may be. . . . His friendship and generousities are gained with ease; but it is difficult to make him forget an offense. He greatly enjoys harangues and panegyrics in which he is praised to excess, periodicals in which he is adorned with splendid titles, triumphal arcs, retinues, homages, and humiliations.

The title of Liberator is the one that he wishes to be given when he is named, and not that of president or general. He writes with vigor and energy; his imagination is rich in sublime and daring ideas. He greatly enjoys reading, particularly the *Social Contract* of Rousseau, which he is always studying. His vanity makes him believe that he knows everything, that nothing is hidden from his cleverness, and that no man is like him. His conversation is agreeable, at times instructive, although he writes better than he speaks. The conviction of his own supremacy at times gives him the idea of ridiculing those who gather in his very house; and his friends thank him for these traits of confidence and friendship, as they themselves term them.

His ideas on religion, as far as it has connection with the political order of a state, are correct and liberal. In the preliminary address of the Bolivian constitution he has set them forth philosophically and exactly; but he has sacrificed them to the Colombian clergy to attract it to his party and gain its support. His decrees after the year 1828, in which he rose to absolute power, seem dictated by the cabinet of Philip II. Only the Inquisition has not been reestablished in Colombia. Bolívar does not love the clergy, al-

though he courts it with dexterity and guile. He loves even less the lawyers and men of letters, whom he also calls ideologues. The class that attracts all his fondness, his generosities, and his applause is the military. Owing everything to it, and hoping for everything from it, he bestows all his attention and his affection on the military, and preferably those born in Venezuela. Colombia in the present day is a field of war, whose headquarters is the city where Bolívar resides.

Salvador de Madariaga

## Bolívar and Miranda, Bolívar and Napoleon

*The most controversial modern biography of Bolívar is that by the Spanish scholar—long resident in England—Salvador de Madariaga. Although Venezuelan historians have dissected the work line by line and found it wanting in almost every respect, it does present the key facts of Bolívar's career and is without doubt skillfully written. What is mainly bothersome is the deprecatory tone that runs through it and the author's tendency, when he has a choice, to advance the most cynical interpretation of Bolívar's motives. In the latter connection, Madariaga finds an excellent opportunity to present Bolívar in an unfavorable light when he comes to discuss the arrest of Miranda, by a group including Bolívar, while the old revolutionary was at La Guaira preparing to leave Venezuela after the collapse of the First Republic. The incident is one that has been hotly debated since the time of independence itself, and Madariaga does not hesitate to conclude that Bolívar sought to prevent Miranda's escape precisely to curry favor with the*

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royalists; he claims further that only the confiscation of Bolívar's property by the restored royalist regime caused him to take up once again the struggle against Spain.

Madariaga's case cannot be definitively disproved. For the record, however, it should be noted that there are other possible interpretations. In particular, it can be argued that Bolívar turned upon Miranda in a burst of indignation over the latter's capitulation to Monteverde; and because the two patriot leaders had found themselves at odds even before this, it is easy to see how Bolívar might have suspected Miranda of outright treason against the Venezuelan cause. As for Bolívar's subsequent expressions of fealty to Spain and of concern for his property interests, which Madariaga makes much of, these could be viewed as mere stratagems to deceive the enemy—who apparently was not deceived for long. To be sure, it is not inconceivable that Bolívar helped arrest Miranda out of sincere patriotic resentment but at the same time was really prepared to contemplate a temporary (and only temporary) reconciliation with Spain, until the confiscation policies of Monteverde and much else besides convinced him that no such thing was possible.

The *Sapphire*, the very corvette of the British navy which had brought to La Guaira the person of Bolívar and the luggage of Miranda in December 1810, had entered La Guaira the day the capitulation had been signed. . . . His Majesty's navy is always punctual. She was due to sail soon, this time with the person of Miranda and the luggage of Bolívar. But Bolívar wished it otherwise and Miranda did not sail.

Miranda arrived in La Guaira toward nightfall on July 30 with [Carlos] Soubllette and two servants. The city was still covered with rubble and ruins caused by the earthquake, in the midst of which could be seen the human ruins and rubble of the republic. There was a feeling of the-devil-

take-the-hindmost in the air and no one thought of anything but flight. Miranda could have embarked that very day. His baggage had been transferred . . . to the *Sapphire*, and Robertson,<sup>1</sup> with his 22,000 pesos, was already on board; but he preferred to stay the night in the Customs House, then also the Governor's residence, as the guest of Casas.<sup>2</sup> Captain Haynes of the *Sapphire* writes: "As soon as I could disengage him from the crowd who encircled him, I informed him of my Officer and Crew being on board the [patriot brig] *Zeloso* and that as matters were so well arranged I should withdraw them. He entreated me not to do so and informed me that he had every reason to fear that I should have full exercise for my Humanity; that he did not expect the incidental arrival of a British ship of war, and had consequently kept that brig as the mainstay of the unfortunate adventurers who had embarked in the cause of Independence under him." This shows that Miranda was popular and need not have feared the crowd and that he was not confident of the capitulation being faithfully observed by Monteverde. Haynes dined at Casas' that evening with Miranda and Dr. [Miguel] Peña, the civil Governor of La Guaira; and in the general conversation, it was suggested that Miranda should remain on shore that night. Miranda consented, much to Haynes' displeasure, who feared that something might happen to him, and urged him to go on board, though speaking less plainly than he would have done had he trusted the other persons present. It seems that Casas had seen to it that Miranda's bedroom could not be locked. Towards three in the morning, he was rudely shaken out of his sleep. Bolívar and two other men were in his room. They bade him dress. He realized he was in unfriendly hands, dressed, came out of the room, and seizing a lantern from Soublette's hand, raised it to the faces of the conspirators: "Cabals, cabals . . . these people are good at nothing but cabals." In the dark, still night,

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<sup>1</sup> Gage Robertson, an English merchant to whom funds had been delivered on Miranda's account. [Ed.]

<sup>2</sup> Manuel María de las Casas, the military commander of La Guaira. [Ed.]

Bolívar, Casas, and Peña forced Miranda to walk all the way to the Castle of San Carlos where they locked him in a dungeon. That very night, Peña left for Caracas to inform Monteverde of the fact. On the way he crossed a courier Monteverde sent to Casas, to order the closing of the harbor pending the arrival of the royal authorities, or else he, Monteverde, would "consider all covenants so far agreed to as null and void."

Such are the facts. Now, the documents. Monteverde wrote to Hodgson<sup>3</sup> . . . claiming the money taken by Miranda from the Government chest. "Very happily"—he added—"the military commander Don Manuel María de las Casas, who was appointed by Miranda to the command of La Guayra (but already corresponded with me, knowing that I came to take possession of said city from the town of Victoria) had the wise and prudent precaution to demand two bonds from Mr. Robertson for said amount." So that by July 20 (the date of the first of these bonds) Casas was already squinting toward the royalist camp and acting accordingly. On August 26, Monteverde wrote from Caracas to the Spanish Government: ". . . those who had been contaminated, but in some way or other have acted contrary to the malignant intention of the rebels, must be forgiven for having gone astray; and we must even bear in mind their acts, according to the fruits thereof in the service of H.M. In this category, Sir, are found Manuel María de las Casas, Miguel Peña, and Simón Bolívar. Casas and Peña were in charge of the government of La Guaira; the former in military, the latter in political affairs, when the rebels of this province tried to escape through that port with their dictator, Miranda, taking away what remained of the Royal Treasury. . . . As soon as I set foot in this city I gave the strictest order to have them arrested in La Guaira; but, luckily, when my orders arrived, though sent with the utmost speed, Casas, by Peña's advice, and by means of Bolívar, had put Miranda in prison and made

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<sup>3</sup> British governor of the Dutch island of Curaçao, which at the time was under British occupation. [Ed.]

sure of all his colleagues there. An operation in which Casas exposed his life, which he would have lost had his orders been disregarded, just as Peña and Bolívar also ran the same risk. . . . I cannot forget the interesting service of Casas, Bolívar and Peña, owing to which the persons of all three have been respected, and passports for foreign countries given only to the second, since his influence and connections might be dangerous in the circumstances."

This document is crucial and final. Miranda was delivered to the Spanish authorities by Casas, Peña, and Bolívar, and in conditions that made Monteverde think that the three men deserved a reward. As proved by Monteverde's report, it was done spontaneously and not at the request of the Spanish authorities. In the case of Casas and Peña the reward was immunity. In the case of Bolívar, a passport. Why did Bolívar hand over Miranda? The matter is ruled by a paragraph in Heredia's *Memoirs*.<sup>4</sup> Heredia was there. He moved among these men whom he knew personally. He was the soul of honor. He may err; he cannot lie. He has no axe to grind. Here is the text: "While in La Guaira, when Miranda went there to embark, he [Bolívar] was one of those who plotted and carried out the arrest of this unfortunate man, his intimate friend, whom he had previously taken pride in having brought to Venezuela; an infamous act, from the black stain of which he will never be able to wash his reputation. Through Don Francisco Iturbe, Tithe Treasurer, he obtained a passport from Monteverde; and he left for Curaçao towards the beginning of August 1812, showing himself converted from his revolutionary ideas and resolved to take service as a volunteer in Lord Wellington's English army to regain the favor of the Spanish Government. This disposition of his mind, which his most intimate friends assured me to be sincere, was altogether altered when he learned in Curaçao that,

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<sup>4</sup> Francisco José de Heredia was an American-born royalist noted for the impartiality with which he criticized fellow royalists as well as the patriots. His memoirs are one of the favorite sources of Madariaga, who shows a definite preference for royalist authors. [Ed.]

soon after his departure, Monteverde had sequestered his lands and the income he had counted on to keep himself decorously in his new career."

This, again, is unanswerable. Bolívar delivered Miranda in order to ingratiate himself with the Spanish Government and cross the line—just as Casas and Peña and Juan Toro and dozens of the most prominent men of the republican party did at the time. Heredia asserts the fact without the slightest reservation. Bolívar left converted and resolved to join not the British army, but Wellington's British army, i.e., the army fighting for Spanish liberty. And he then adds that the sincerity of this intention was vouched for by Bolívar's most intimate friends. This puts it beyond doubt that Bolívar expressed this intention in conversation—whether he was sincere or not, a fact it is important to bear in mind for later use.

Two contemporary documents in Bolívar's own hand fully bear out Heredia. In a letter he wrote to Iturbe from Curaçao, . . . there is a significant postscript: "Were any rumors to arrive there reflecting on my political behavior or my ways, you may deny them with the certainty that they are untrue. I warn you, not because I think that it might happen, but because I understand there are here many ill-meaning persons from Caracas desirous to win favor with the Government by acting as informers." Since Don Francisco Iturbe was a high official of the Spanish Government and a European Spaniard, thanks to whose protection Bolívar had left La Guaira in freedom, this proves that Bolívar was determined to behave as a good Spaniard and afraid of being accused by informers of not doing so. On September 19, he wrote again to Iturbe to ask him to see that another man was appointed instead of [Domingo] Ascanio (who had left for the Canary Islands) to administer his fortune, that his houses in the City were rented, and other details to that effect; witness to his confidence that his interests were safe in spite of his past political activities. This must be noted for further reference. Then he added: "What I most instantly press on you is my claim that the authorities lift the embargo on my brother's estate, which,



owing to his death, I must inherit; and do not forget that in order to come into the ownership of this property I am ready for every possible sacrifice." What could an exiled Bolívar sacrifice to the Spanish Government but his political position?

There are few cases in History better proved by firsthand documentary evidence than this. Three contemporary witnesses, two of them, Monteverde and Bolívar, directly concerned, and the third, Heredia, a close observer, have left accounts which, independent though they are, dovetail perfectly. Monteverde says that Bolívar asked for passports for foreign countries, and Heredia says that Bolívar wanted to join Wellington's army; Monteverde says that Bolívar spontaneously delivered Miranda and deserves a reward for it; and Heredia says that he did it to be rewarded, to which Bolívar adds that he is anxious to be believed when he says he will behave in a manner satisfactory to the Spanish Government; Heredia says that Bolívar changed his mind when his estate was confiscated, and Bolívar writes that in order to gain possession of his brother's estate (let alone his own, which he assumes safe) he will consent to any sacrifice. The whole story is summed up and confirmed by the Cuban [Francisco Javier] Yanes, who knew Bolívar well and served under him: "Bolívar, through an honorable Spaniard, Don Francisco Iturbe, obtained a passport from Monteverde and with a few of his friends arrived in Curaçao, meaning to sail for Europe to serve in Wellington's army; but as he learned that his property had been sequestered and Monteverde's violent and despotic deeds and that were he to return to Caracas he would have the same fate, he decided to go to Cartagena for help to free his country from that perfidious tyrant."

*Still another episode—or series of episodes—that readily lends itself to Madariaga's treatment is Bolívar's assumption of dictatorial powers during the period of the Second Republic. Only here what interests the author is the Napoleonic parallel, with a side-glance at Hernán Cortés in order to evoke a*

*shrewd comparison between Bolívar's procedure and that used by the conqueror of Mexico in throwing off the authority of his original sponsor, the governor of Cuba.*

On August 6, 1813, Simón Bolívar, aged thirty years and thirteen days, entered Caracas in triumph. Twelve beautiful maidens in white, decked with the national colors, crowned him with laurel and flowers, while the young hero stood in full dress uniform, bareheaded, holding in his hand a baton of command. Through streets of houses in ruins, but gaily decorated, and echoing with enthusiastic acclamations, Simón Bolívar passed for thirty long minutes, drinking fast the heady wine of glory so dangerous for his physical and moral health. While living this unforgettable hour, the young leader would perhaps cast a mental glance on that day, September 2, 1812, "just eleven months ago," when he had landed, a fugitive, in Curaçao; or on that day, July 2, 1812, "just thirteen months ago," when he had failed in Puerto Cabello and, with his head in his hands, thought himself unfit to command the humblest private; perhaps even on that day, now distant in a dusty past, when he had sworn on the Sacred Mount to liberate his country from the Spanish yoke. More recent, more pressing, he might think of that morning, "just a few days ago," when on entering Barinas he had heard that there were also patriots and liberators in the Eastern provinces and how he had feared that he might arrive late to share with them the glory he was now enjoying alone, as the one and only Liberator.

But when the acclamations died out and the festivities were over, the *Libertador* had to attend to a situation by no means bright. Venezuela was still split into three parts: Maracaibo, Coro, and Puerto Cabello were Spanish; Barinas and Caracas were his; Cumaná and Barcelona were under the Liberator of the Eastern Provinces, Santiago Mariño. His writ was law but only over one-third of the country. He decided that, at least over that third, it would rule unchallenged. This was not an easy task. There were at least three traditions in the country that worked against it: the first was the infatuation of the "federalists" bent on

imitating the American Constitution because it invested with an honorable political cloak of foreign make an all too national tendency to localism and anarchy; the second was the "gownsmen" tendency to organize the government under republican forms, leaving the military strictly confined to warfare purposes; and the third was the tendency of the upper classes to obey no one but themselves and of the lower classes to remain attached to the rule of Spain. Finally, Bolívar had to watch over his worst enemy, his own unruly and arbitrary temperament, which at times deprived his words and deeds of all authority.

To counter the federalists, he wrote a long political letter to the Governor of Barinas, an advocate of the old federal constitution, wisely apportioning to him the supreme administration of civil and criminal Justice without appeal, while reserving for himself war, peace, negotiations with foreign powers, and finance. On August 9 he issued a Manifesto to appease the gownsmen fearful of his dictatorial intentions. "An Assembly of prominent persons, of virtuous and wise men, must be solemnly called together to discuss and sanction the nature of our Government and the magistrates who shall wield its powers in the exceptional and critical circumstances which surround the Republic." Note the "virtuous and wise men," a Roussellian touch that at once betrays the rootless character of this promise. Bolívar was not necessarily insincere in making it; he probably meant it honestly; but it was a promise wandering in the clouds of his mental skies, which the next winds might and would drive away.

The next sentence ushers in what was to be a long series of dramatic gestures of renunciation and resignation. "The Liberator of Venezuela renounces for ever and formally protests that he will accept no authority but that which may lead our soldiers to the dangers implied in saving the country." The ungrammatical turn of the phrase from the pen of a man so able to express himself clearly, shows that it came from the unlogical levels of his mind. Bolívar was already the dissembling dictator, the Caesar disguised as a democrat he was all his life to be. A few days earlier, in La Victoria, he had said to his close friend Iturbe: "Have no fears about

the colored people; I flatter them because I need them; democracy on my lips and aristocracy here"—and he pointed to his heart.<sup>5</sup> And Heredia notes that "meanwhile he assumed the whole military and civil power, publishing laws in his name and on his own authority." It did not occur to him, nor possibly to anyone else, that he was in fact assuming dictatorial powers on the most important issue of all: that of the constitution of the new government. When he granted full judicial sovereignty to the Governor of Barinas, on whose behalf did he divest—and whom did he divest of such powers; and by whose authority did he hand them over? "A kind of Triumvirate was formed"—Heredia goes on to say—"with José Félix Ribas, who came as second in command and took over the military government of Caracas, and Cristóbal Mendoza . . . but always the so-called Liberator retained absolute control as generalissimo, on account of the war. There was no law but his will, nor other principles of justice than massacre and loot."

He was too much of a realist to be unaware of the fact that, since the people of Venezuela were with Spain and not with the republicans, the young republic had to rest on the Army, a conclusion that suited his pretorian temperament. He therefore worked from the first to establish his hold upon the army. He was ever careful to keep his chief lieutenants happy. He went as far as to grant one of them, Ribas, a rank in the Army higher than his own. The *Cabildo*<sup>6</sup> (by the way, with no powers whatsoever for such

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<sup>5</sup> This quotation is attributed to a seemingly reliable source and could be authentic, although it just as well may not be. Certainly one should not read too much into it. Bolívar repeatedly emphasized that the elimination of legal discrimination against nonwhites was required by both strategy and ideology, but neither did he try to conceal his opinion that the lower classes generally (colored or otherwise) were in fact unprepared to take an active part in political affairs. The obvious solution was to adopt economic and literacy qualifications for the suffrage and officeholding—something that neither Bolívar nor other patriot leaders thought to be in conflict with the technical equality of all racial groups. [Ed.]

<sup>6</sup> City council, referring to that of Caracas. [Ed.]

a thing) made him Captain General and gave him the title of *Libertador*; . . . but in his speech of thanks he took care to point out that the true liberators were his officers, of whom he named several, and his troops. Generous and noble, no doubt, and sincerely born of a heart that knew how to be grateful, this attitude was also shrewd and political; for Bolívar was resolved to be the undisputed head of the State, and he knew he could only found his authority on the armed forces. For the same reason he instituted the *Military Order of the Liberators*, which he granted to his army commanders and was later to offer to his rival Mariño.

His correspondence with Mariño shows him at his best; patient, skillful, clear, high-minded and ready to take the risks to which generosity exposes ambition. During November and December 1813, he wrote often and always in this vein. He was willing to keep the two military establishments separate but thought it indispensable to unite the nation politically and advocated that the province should soon elect their representatives who would elect the President. He flatters Mariño and says that "as a reward for the sacrifices of your Excellency and for the victories which had crowned them, I should wish you to become President." He failed to win Mariño over, because Mariño mistrusted him. Being ambitious himself, he guessed his rival's ambition; and he kept away, under cover of his own army.

After all, it was on his army that Bolívar also relied for his own political authority, now strengthened by his victory over Ceballos, a regular general. By the end of the year, and seeing that all his attempts at union with Mariño had failed, Bolívar thought the time had come to have his dictatorship confirmed by the civic authorities. He called a meeting of all the "civil servants and heads of families" of the city . . . It was a kind of informal and local parliament, in the style of a Spanish junta. He took the chair and made one of his typical speeches: "I gave you laws, an administration, a government; but I am not the sovereign. I long to hand over my power to your representatives and hope you will relieve me of an office which someone else among you may worthily hold." Then the Governor of

Caracas, Mendoza, moved that Bolívar be confirmed as dictator. Whereupon Bolívar refused: "I have not come to oppress you with my victorious arms. . . . A lucky soldier does not acquire the right to rule over his country" . . . and much more to that effect. (Or, as Bernal Díaz makes Cortés say in similar circumstances: "I don't want that, I don't want that, but drop it into my hat.") Then one Alzuru let the cat out of the bag: "Let us grant supreme dictatorial authority to Simón Bolívar by acclamation, so that, being instituted as our First Magistrate, he, as well as the Republic, may be freed from the kind of dependency under which he has been acting as the commissioned officer of the Congress of New Granada." Just so had Cortés got rid of his subordination to Governor Velázquez by resigning his powers before the *Cabildo* of Veracruz. Dictatorship as a way to separatism; separatism as a way to dictatorship.

Bolívar still resisted; and as Mendoza had spoken of the task of uniting East and West, he took the opportunity to get rid of Mariño. "For the Supreme Power, there are illustrious citizens who deserve your choice better than I do. There is General Mariño, Liberator of the East, a leader worthy of taking your destinies in hand." Needless to say, the *Cabildo* would not hear of this; and Bolívar had to bow to its decision and accept that dictatorship which he had never dreamed of letting go from his firm hands. He had what he had striven for; and he saw to it that the proceedings included a profuse note of thanks to New Granada, so as to make it clear that his subordination to the sister country was at an end. True he added that the Venezuelan people ardently desired total union with New Granada; and he had himself invested with a mandate to endeavor to bring it about: but this time he would be able to treat as an equal with the *granadinos*.

This scene has been presented as either a model of democratic behavior or an unscrupulous comedy on the part of a political adventurer. It was one more of the thousand acts performed by Spanish cape-and-sword men to cover themselves in the eyes of the gownsmen of the country. Steeped in law, but anarchists at heart, the Spanish conquerors usually behaved in this manner. Bolívar remained faithful

to a tradition many centuries old. What therefore should be emphasized at this juncture is, not his thirst for power, but his respect for form. A Boves, a Monteverde, as thirsty for power as he was, would not have risen to his conception of the importance of form. A comedy, no doubt, but well played and with a good intention. The need of the day was that he should rule unfettered; the need of the morrow, that republican institutions should remain intact.

But the scene is too reminiscent of the way in which Bonaparte had had himself appointed First Consul for life not to have been an imitation of this illustrious precedent. We know how deeply Bolívar admired and imitated the Corsican. In Bolívar's speech of thanks on receiving the title of Liberator there is a phrase that deserves attention: "Your Lordships have acclaimed me Captain General of the Armies and the Liberator of Venezuela, a title more glorious and satisfactory for me than the sceptre of all the empires of the earth." Is it not strange that this republican should suddenly speak of sceptre and of empire when no one was thinking of such things—no one but him, who did not even know he was thinking of them? In the unexplored recesses of his ambitious soul shone still the two coronations of Napoleon.

## ❧ IV ❧

# Some Modern Interpretations



Laureano Vallenilla  
Lanz

## Ideologues, Disintegration, and the "Bolivian Law"

*One of modern Venezuela's most provocative writers was Laureano Vallenilla Lanz (1870-1936), who claimed to bring a hard-headed realism and sociological insights to bear on the study of his nation's past. In practice, his methodology was less rigorous than he himself imagined, but by his emphasis on underlying social forces he exercised an important—and for the most part beneficial—influence on the historiography of the independence movement. He also attained continental notoriety as an apologist for Latin American dictatorships; a strong supporter in his own lifetime of Juan Vicente Gómez, he fittingly produced a son of exactly the same name who served as Minister of Interior in the regime of Marcos Pérez Jiménez. And though he did not quite presume to equate Gómez with Bolívar, he did interpret the life and thought of the Liberator in essentially authoritarian terms. He saw Bolívar as engaged in a constant struggle in de-*

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Translated from *Cesarismo democrático; estudios sobre las bases sociológicas de la constitución efectiva de Venezuela* (4th ed., Caracas, 1961), pp. 149-151, 153, 172-178, 183. (The order of material has been rearranged at one point for greater clarity of presentation.)

*fense of order against both impractical imported ideologies and the forces of disunion that were inherent in Latin American society. Especially in the case of federalism, he saw those ideologies as simply aiding and abetting the inherent forces of disunion. At the same time, Vallenilla Lanz was a warm admirer of the Liberator's Bolivian constitution, which he took as clear proof of genius. But he paid no attention to the various safeguards against arbitrary rule that Bolívar himself claimed to have included in that instrument, emphasizing instead the concept of a single ruler embodying all the higher interests of the nation and holding power indefinitely. He called this concept the "Bolivian law," or "Bolivian principle," and he firmly believed that it answered one of the central needs of Spanish American society and politics.*

. . . [The] only statesman of genius and originality that Spanish America has produced [is] the Liberator Simón Bolívar. Emancipated from the prejudices of his epoch, when the disciples of Rousseau and Mably still believed that "to make a people was the same as to manufacture a lock" and that "societies in the hands of the legislator were as clay in those of the potter," Bolívar as early as his celebrated Cartagena Manifesto in 1812 revealed the most profound disdain for those legislators who "far from consulting the codes that could teach them the practical science of government followed the maxims of the benevolent visionaries who, creating fantastic republics in their imaginations, sought to attain political perfection, assuming the perfectibility of the human race."<sup>1</sup> . . . [Similarly, when] in Angostura he recommended that the legislators study the ethnic composition of our people, he was expressing an opinion . . . that might equally be offered today by any of the great sociologists, who consider the laws of heredity as one of the factors of greatest importance in the constitution

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Document 1. The author does not quite give an exact quotation. [Ed.]

and development of societies and consequently in the political instincts that serve as the basis for effective institutions.

If it is true that it was Aristotle who first considered government as "a work of nature or as the result of the natural growth of society," that concept came to be completely forgotten; and it is now, in these latest times, as a reaction against a whole century of sophisms inspired by misguided interpretations of the theory of the Social Contract, that the opinion of Aristotle again prevails on a positive scientific basis. It is therefore remarkable that the *Liberator*, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, spoke with such precision of the factors that must necessarily have an influence on the constitution of Venezuela: the race, climate, physical and earthly environment, geographic situation, territorial extent, way of life, and as a complement to those prime factors, the religion, inclinations (instincts and tendencies), density of population, commerce, customs, and whatever special traits operate in some manner automatically in the existence and destiny of nations.

When our "sophists"—who unfortunately have abounded at all periods of our national existence—accepted the classic theory of man as an abstraction, they believed that in breaking the political ties with Spain they were also breaking the hereditary psychological ties and that, in decreeing political and civil equality, they were destroying caste prejudices, the secular foundation of the colonial system of hierarchy. The *Liberator* [on the other hand] advised the constitution makers at Angostura to keep in mind that "our people are neither European nor North American" . . . [and strongly emphasized that the distinctive conditions of Spanish America required distinctive institutions].

The pretension of those who in the name of certain abstract dogmas wanted to shackle the discretionary power of the *Liberator* is all the more striking because [it occurred during a state of war]. Absorbed or blinded by theories, they did not at all consider the place and time in which they were pretending to legislate and to govern; and almost always in good faith they worked to restrain the single, personal, absorbing, centralizing, and despotic power created

by circumstances and by the supreme necessity of victory. When Bolívar asked for unity, the ideologues would not only issue a declaration of rights but clamor for federation, which was definitely nothing but the legal sanction of the communal fragmentation, the narrow and miserable parochialism that served as foundation for the colonial regime. Pretending to be revolutionaries and advanced reformers, they were simply traditionalists. . . . Thus is explained why the word *federation* was so popular in all America. The peoples could not understand the doctrine, the system; but the federal mechanism, not in the sense of union, of alliance, of integration, but in that of separation, antagonism, communalism, belfry rivalry, was perfectly suited to the traditional and only way of living, the parochial sentiment, the intimate love for one's plot of native land, the only fatherland that they could then conceive. The other and greater fatherlands that were to arise from the burning midst of the war where heroes were forging the prime element of nationality, which is history; those that were still a simple abstraction, a vague and imprecise conception, all the more difficult to understand and love, the more extensive [in territory] they were; those republics that at the end of the war against Spain existed only as official fictions, still incoherent organisms—they could not awaken any precise sentiment, any concrete emotion in the soul of primitive peoples.

In that struggle of Bolívar with the constitutionalists and the federalists one can see exactly defined the two movements, the two tendencies, the two ends of the evolution that all organisms have inevitably followed: disintegration and integration. . . . The movement of disintegration that was the first stage of the Hispanic American nations on breaking their ties with the mother country—a movement that was exactly the same as the one occurring in all Europe at the collapse of the Roman Empire—was baptized with the name of federation. And the majority of our historians, judging phenomena as elaborate as those that generate the formation of societies with inconceivable flippancy, have attributed that tendency which was so logical,

so spontaneous, so in keeping with the laws of social biology that it can well be characterized as purely instinctive, to the influence of the principles sanctioned by the constitution of the United States, to the simple spirit of imitation of the system adopted by the former English colonies, which were then engaged in the same task of integration as the Spanish—a task that after a hundred years still has not ended for them either.

Nothing is more surprising, if one notes that the federal system, considered even by Bolívar himself as the ideal of political perfectibility, as the loftiest conception to which the apostles of democracy had attained, coincided with the instinctive tendencies of primitive peoples.

The work of the constitution makers of Cúcuta had to be ephemeral, because it was fatally contradictory. They did not limit themselves to decreeing the union of the three sections that were going to constitute the great republic, which was the only rational thing at that moment, but, considering themselves . . . the legitimate delegates of the will and the rights of peoples that did not even have news of the existence of that assembly, they believed that they "would not fully discharge their trust" if they did not decree a constitution. . . . Whichever system was adopted, they necessarily had to fall into the same contradiction. For if they chose federation, sanctioning the anarchic and dissolvent colonial tradition, it would obstruct and annul the action of the single and centralizing power imposed not only by the necessities of the struggle but by the need to integrate the elements that were to constitute the nationality, converting it from a simple official fiction into a tangible reality. On the other hand, the centralist system [that was finally adopted], pretending to make those peoples uniform by subjecting them to the impersonal rule of law—of a law that was by no means the concrete expression of the peoples' political instincts or of the imperious necessities of the moment—inevitably had to be mocked and bastardized at every step, with nothing left standing except the supreme will of the Liberator, the indisputable authority of the single chief, who with perfect right claimed absolute submission

and blind obedience over and above the Constitution and the laws, as was clearly seen in the revolution of Páez in 1826.

In none of the component elements of our political society did Bolívar find the instincts that could conscientiously bring the legislators to adopt certain republican principles that until then—with the exception of the United States—were purely theoretical. He therefore wished from the very first moment for a stable government to be constituted so that there might be “the least possible friction between the general will and the legitimate power.” There one sees as an imperious necessity the institution of the “Bolivian” president, which has been followed in practice in Hispanic America despite all the constitutions that have established the contrary principle; because, in conformity with the laws of sociological determinism, neither in the Spaniard, nor in the Indian, . . . nor in the African, nor much less in the nomads<sup>2</sup> who had so noisily burst in upon our history, were there to be found the political instincts that produce the alternability of supreme power.

In his Bolivian constitution, in an *uncrowned monarchy*, the penetrating genius of the Liberator sought to legalize and systematize what was a rigorously scientific, necessary, and inescapable fact like any other sociological phenomenon, instituting a life-term president with the faculty of choosing his successor. The history of all the Hispanic American nations in a hundred years of turmoils and autocracies is the most eloquent proof of the fulfillment of that law over all the contrary precepts written in the constitutions. . . . From Argentina to Mexico no country of America has eluded the fulfillment of the Bolivian Law. From Rosas, under whose sanguinary despotism the great Republic of the Plata was unified, to Porfirio Díaz, who gave his fatherland the years of greatest well-being and greatest effective progress that its history records, all our democracies have been unable to free themselves from an-

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<sup>2</sup> i.e., the free-living *llaneros*, who were in effect a mixture of all three races. [Ed.]

archy except under the authority of one representative man, capable of imposing his will, of dominating all rival egotisms, and of being, in sum, as García Calderón says referring to General Castilla,<sup>3</sup> *the necessary dictator*, in peoples that are evolving toward the consolidation of their national individuality.

The dissociative and anarchic *caudillismo*, which arose with the war of independence, was dominated and utilized by the Liberator in favor of the emancipation of Hispanic America, establishing from that time forward in Venezuela, with the preponderance of Páez, what sociologists have called *mechanical solidarity*, because of the interlocking and subordination of little caudillos around the central caudillo, the representative of national unity.<sup>4</sup> Such a solidarity is founded on individual commitment, on the loyalty of man to man, and is transformed only very slowly into *organic solidarity*, when the development of all the factors that constitute modern progress gradually imposes on the national organism new conditions of existence and, consequently, new forms of political law.

Only by studying with a serene spirit the correspondence of the Liberator can one come to understand that tragic struggle between the narrow dogmatism of the *manufacturers* of exotic constitutions and the enormous breadth of understanding of a true statesman, of a great legislator capable of understanding years ahead of modern sociologists that the social and political form of every people is necessarily determined by its character and by its past; that that form must be molded even in the least of its features to fit the living features on which it is applied, because other-

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<sup>3</sup> Ramón Castilla, the dominant figure in Peruvian politics of the mid-nineteenth century, as characterized by the Peruvian publicist Francisco García Calderón. [Ed.]

<sup>4</sup> While Gran Colombia lasted, Páez according to this scheme would have to be considered both a "central caudillo" in relation to other Venezuelan chieftains and a "little caudillo" in relation to Bolívar, who "utilized" him as agent for controlling Venezuela. By 1830, obviously, only the former role remained. [Ed.]

wise it will be broken and fall to pieces. That is why he called for studying the American peoples, analyzing their component elements, penetrating deeply into their idiosyncrasy in order to find the institutional forms that would consolidate the work of independence, avoid anarchy and the struggle of inconsiderate ambitions, and serve as an orderly transition between the colonial regime and the organization and functioning of self-government.



José Luis  
Salcedo-Bastardo

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## Economic Revolution: Agrarian Reform

*The mid-twentieth century has seen new social and economic issues come increasingly to the fore in Latin America, overshadowing the legal and constitutional, religious, and merely personal issues that previously supplied most of the formal content of political debate. This development has a close parallel or reflection in the historiography of Bolívar, with scholars attempting to discover in his writings and his programs a precocious commitment to the aims of modern social democracy. Perhaps the best known of such attempts is that of the Venezuelan scholar J. L. Salcedo-Bastardo, who among other things has attributed to Bolívar the aim of launching a true agrarian reform. His interpretation has been challenged on several points of detail, such as his tendency to group the cowboy llaneros under the general heading of "peasants," and possibly it reads too much social significance into the land bonus offered to patriot soldiers, on which the thesis chiefly rests.*

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Translated and printed from J. L. Salcedo-Bastardo, *Visión y revisión de Bolívar* (7th ed. Buenos Aires, 1966), pp. 147-152, 154-157, with permission of the author.

*Nevertheless, Salcedo-Bastardo has performed a useful service in focusing attention on a measure that still has not been adequately examined. At the same time, his work interestingly combines a reevaluation of Bolívar's thought in contemporary socioeconomic terms with what had also been a persistent theme of the traditional historiography: namely, the view of Bolívar as a hero ahead of his time, whose aims were repeatedly frustrated because his fellow Spanish Americans were not yet capable of appreciating them.*

. . . [Bolívar] attempted to carry out in the economic field a work paralleling what he had achieved in the political order, what he had projected in social and juridical affairs, and what he ardently desired in the spheres of the spiritual and historical. Adverse circumstances frustrated his intent, which is recorded in our annals with enduring and unmistakable characteristics: It sought the handing over of land to the dispossessed, the distributing of the countryside and national properties in general among the material authors of the liberation. He thus aspires to satisfy the economic clamor of the soldiers, which is to say, of the people itself.

For proselytizing purposes and in vague and demagogic form, Boves<sup>1</sup> previously orders—in November of 1813—the distribution among the members of his troops of “the assets which are taken.” The Bolivarian measure, on the contrary, appears preceded by and endowed with all its juridical requisites. First, by decree of September 3, 1817, the properties of royalist Spaniards and Americans had been confiscated in favor of the republic. One month later, October 10 of the same year, is issued the law on distribution of national properties among the military—of all ranks—of the patriot forces of Venezuela.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The royalist caudillo José Tomás Boves. [Ed.]

<sup>2</sup> The “law” in question, actually a decree issued by Bolívar in his capacity as *jefe supremo*, is reproduced as Document 6C. [Ed.]

The aspiration for agrarian reform is of appreciable importance for understanding the work and thought of Bolívar; he observes that revolutions need to be founded on realities and that if independence is not built upon the fact of economic and social justice—which in this case must be agrarian justice—its results will be diminished. The economic situation of Venezuela (perceptibly similar in a good part of the continent) has then as protagonists in conflict on one side a series of omnipotent proprietors, successors of the conquistadors, . . . and on the other side an enormous mass of peasants deprived of the barest necessities. The latter are those who at the hour of emancipation enlist where they see the hope of a substantive improvement, which in the long run will make the nation a success; to correspond to that most just desire and to the zealous courage with which they serve the patriotic cause, Bolívar plans the agrarian reform.

The just intention and its significance appear clearly contained in the message of Bolívar to the council of state in Angostura: "The soldiers of the liberating army are too deserving of the Government's rewards for it to have been able to forget them. Men who have faced all dangers, who have abandoned all their possessions, and who have suffered all ills should not remain without the just recompense that their disinterest, their valor, and their virtue deserve. I, then, in the name of the republic have ordered all national properties distributed among the defenders of the fatherland. The law, which sets the terms and nature of this donation, is the document that with the greatest satisfaction I have the honor to offer the council. The reward of merit is the most august act of human power."

The rotund and conclusive tone of this declaration was not the work of chance, nor was this the only occasion on which the Liberator categorically bore witness to the importance that—within his organic revolutionary plan—he assigned to these measures. In the very Angostura Address, his fullest doctrinal expression, he confirms his thought—fifteen months later—with the same ideas worked out in more literary form. . . . Note that the distribution of land to the soldiers, along with the related abolition of slavery—

another of the principal fulcrums of his revolution—for which he also pleads in similar dramatic style, are the only two deeds that Bolívar feels obliged to discuss in an address that does not have the character of a rendering of accounts of what has been done but of a solemn formulation of political doctrine; and the importance of those acts increases sharply if one recalls that—as Bolívar well knew—they had to do with a people that for a long time could be “nothing other than an agricultural people.” The traditional school has ignored the transcendence of these two measures: economic justice and social justice, bases of the creative work of the Liberator, with which he was aiming to achieve in Hispanic America the agricultural counterpart of the industrial revolution that was being fulfilled in contemporaneous Europe.

But if the distribution had to do principally with the practical aspect of his political-economic ideal, as well as justice, it also looked to the national interest. A false agrarian reform, conceived with the sole purpose of giving away lands, without regard for the consequences, would have been self-defeating. Such would have been the disorderly atomization of the large estates into an archipelago of *minifundios*. Bolívar has a clear concept of the productive unit or economic unit; and he anticipates the modern system of collective farms, allowing many beneficiaries to unite to make petition in common for the larger estates. . . . Such a just and forward-looking intention appeared to be furthered by the system of payment established in the absence of Bolívar, and which in truth was a death blow to frustrate this directive of the revolution. In effect, it was agreed to give the soldiers bonds,<sup>3</sup> which their chiefs ac-

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<sup>3</sup> The “bonds” were certificates entitling the holders to receive a share of national property whenever conditions permitted the formal distribution to be made; recipients were authorized to pool their bonds so as to obtain a larger estate than any one of them was entitled to individually. The procedure had much in common, obviously, with the payment of war bonus by means of land warrants to veterans of the (U.S.) Revolutionary War, who also sold them in many cases to speculators at a fraction of face value. [Ed.]

quired at a laughable price. In this way the large properties passed almost intact into the hands of prominent caudillos of the liberation. In the long run the problem persisted almost the same as ever, with a slight change of personages. Such a distortion of his proposal did not figure in the plans of Bolívar.

In harmony with his Colombian economic revolution, Bolívar is to confirm the sincerity of his proposal in Bolivia, in 1825, when he is equally anxious for the new order to be constructed on bases of material justice and orders the lands belonging to the state to be divided, giving preference to "the Indians and those who have demonstrated the greatest decision for the cause of independence or who have suffered harm for this principle." The situation of popular misery being more serious than in Colombia, he there decides upon a universal distribution: "Every individual, of whatever sex or age he may be, will receive one fanegada<sup>4</sup> of land in fertile and watered places and in places lacking water and sterile will receive two." A period of one year is allowed after the adjudication for those concerned to undertake cultivation, [but] if they should not do this "they shall be deprived of the possession and ownership of said lands and adjudication shall be made to others who will cultivate them as is fitting." In pursuit of justice and impartiality, and seeking the greatest efficiency in the distribution, he orders this carried out by "persons of probity and intelligence."

The Bolivarian expression "I ploughed the sea," in the light of the newest and most rigorous hermeneutics, entails a plain truth very different from the lyrical content that the traditional school has attributed to it. Bolívar pronounces it on the threshold of death, in a kind of objective and positive balance of the enterprise that he sought to guide. In this way the leader presents himself before history, conscious of the magnitude of his aspiration and of the imperfection of the work accomplished, of how only one of the supports could be erected, and erected halfway; and con-

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<sup>4</sup> A measure of land roughly equivalent to 1.6 acres. [Ed.]

scious moreover of how the lack of collaboration and comprehension, and the immaturity of his time, as well as the resistance of a system that had not been sufficiently weakened made his full ambition impossible and null. The man of the people, who truly fought for the patriot cause, the illiterate *llanero*, the ignorant peasant, failed to receive satisfaction from the emancipation. The satisfaction offered was political, and politically they did not count; for them it mattered little whether the head of Venezuela was titled captain general, intendant, or president, and whether he was Ábalos, Emparan, Páez, or Briceño Méndez.<sup>5</sup> The land continued in the grip of the same owners as always, the situation of servitude and of peasant misery remained unalterable or rather aggravated by the war, and slavery in all its vigor.<sup>6</sup> For them there was no revolution. . . . And [Bolívar's] unhappy foreboding that those defrauded popular forces would be unleashed by the intransigence and betrayal of their leaders was more than realized in the barbarous fratricidal struggles (still present today though with another style). "Be persuaded"—he told Gual<sup>7</sup>—"that we are over an abyss, or rather over a volcano about to make its explosion." To make a "revolution" on the periphery, to cover the hunger of the people with pompous institutions of paper, the work of those myopic politicians who never grasped the drama that Bolívar with sincere courage was seeking to resolve, was like "building a Greek building on a Gothic base at the side of a crater." That is the lesson of his wary confession: "I fear peace more than war, and with this I give an idea of everything that I do not say, nor can be said."

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<sup>5</sup> The reference is to José de Ábalos, the most forceful of the colonial *intendentes* of Venezuela; Vicente Emparan, who was captain general at the time of the April 1810 revolution; José Antonio Páez; and General Pedro Briceño Méndez, a close friend and military collaborator of Bolívar who was the first Secretary of War of Gran Colombia. [Ed.]

<sup>6</sup> With regard to slavery, at least a little more was accomplished than the author suggests. See the introductory note to Document 6B. [Ed.]

<sup>7</sup> Pedro Gual, the Venezuelan patriot statesman who became Foreign Secretary of Gran Colombia. [Ed.]

M. S. Al'perovich,  
V. I. Ermolaev,  
I. R. Lavretskii,  
and S. I. Semyonov

## The Bolívar of Marx Corrected

*In the recent flowering of Soviet scholarly literature about Latin America the independence movement has received its share of attention, and naturally the role of Bolívar has not been forgotten. The picture of the Liberator that is presented to Soviet readers is in general a favorable one, with special emphasis on his social and economic measures and on his support for a Spanish American concert of nations to be organized without the participation of the United States. These characteristics are clearly evident in the following passages from an article collaboratively written by four leading Soviet Latin Americanists. (One of the four, I. R. Lavretskii, is also the author of a*

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Translated from M. S. Al'perovich, V. I. Ermolaev, I. R. Lavretskii, and S. I. Semyonov, "Ob osvoboditel'noi voine ispanskikh kolonii v Amerike (1810-1826)" ["Concerning the War of Liberation of the Spanish Colonies in America (1810-1826)"], *Voprosi Istorii*, Nov. 1956, pp. 62-67, 71. The translation was made initially from the Spanish version appearing in *Cuadernos de Cultura* (Buenos Aires), No. 32, Nov. 1957, and was corrected in the light of the Russian text by John S. Bushnell.

*separate biography of Bolívar.) On the other hand, the authors point out, the Soviet image of Bolívar was not always so favorable. At one time the main emphasis was placed on his role as the representative of the interests of a particular class—the creole great landowners—rather than as the leader of a truly national movement. To a considerable extent, it would seem, this more negative image of Bolívar could be traced back to the sketch of the Liberator that came from the pen of Karl Marx himself, whose shortcomings as a historian of Latin America are now duly attributed to the inadequacy of the source materials he had available when he wrote. Even the more recent Soviet writers, for that matter, are careful to point out that wealthy merchants and latifundistas, not “broad popular masses,” were the main beneficiaries of independence, and they admit that Bolívar’s actions were necessarily conditioned in some way by his socioeconomic position, although they perhaps do not deal as clearly with the latter point as may be desired. Nevertheless, their overall interpretation is not markedly different from that of many non-Marxist historians.*

Unfortunately, the activity of a number of leaders of the struggle for independence of the Spanish colonies has often received an incorrect evaluation in our literature. The objectively progressive nature of the activity of Simón Bolívar (1783–1830) in the period of the war for independence is recognized in Soviet literature. Nevertheless, in some works viewpoints and tendencies are at times attributed to him that he certainly did not share. Thus in the *New History of Colonial and Dependent Countries* it is asserted that Bolívar sought “to take advantage of the popular masses for the political elevation of the creole landowners and for his own career.”<sup>1</sup> The author of the article on

<sup>1</sup> *Novaya istoriya kolonial'nikh i zavisimikh stran*, Akademiya Nauk, SSSR (Moscow, 1940), vol. I, p. 371.



Bolívar in the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia* writes that Bolívar "tried to preserve and make permanent the system of semifeudal exploitation of the peasants by the creole landowners, was opposed to the active participation of the popular masses in the fight for independence. Fearing the popular masses, Bolívar tried to assure himself of the aid of the ruling circles of the great powers, primarily England."<sup>2</sup> This interpretation of all Bolívar's activity can hardly be considered accurate.

The statements of contemporaries, in particular three foreigners who participated in the war for independence [H. L. V. Ducoudray-Holstein, Gustavus Hippisley, and William Miller], constitute the basis for this type of assertion.

All these sources were used in the article of Karl Marx, "Bolívar y Ponte," written in 1858 for the *New American Cyclopedia*. In it are emphasized the decisive role of the popular masses in the fortunes of the First and Second Venezuelan Republics and the importance of the decree of liberation of the slaves, and it also contains a number of interesting considerations on the course of military events. But the negative evaluation of the personality and activity of Bolívar that is given in that article cannot be considered correct. Marx lacked much important data that was introduced later in the scientific studies by major investigators like [José] Gil Fortoul, Vicente Lecuna, and others. Some authors, disregarding all these circumstances, base their interpretation of Bolívar exclusively on the statements made by Marx in the article mentioned, and also transfer that interpretation to other protagonists of the emancipation movement and even to the character of the war for independence as a whole.

In reality, S. Bolívar is an outstanding figure of the emancipation movement. Born in a wealthy family of landowners of Venezuela, he was educated in Europe, where he became acquainted with the advanced social ideas of those times. The young Bolívar took part in the conspiracies of the youthful oppositionists in the year 1809. In the course

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<sup>2</sup> 2nd ed., vol. 5, p. 470.

of 1810-1812, that is during the period of Venezuelan self-government and of the First Republic, he took an active part in the so-called "Patriotic Society" created by Miranda, which played an important role in the proclamation of the independence of Venezuela. [However, for lack of mass support] the First Republic was defeated.

Having understood the necessity of mobilizing the popular masses to defend the cause of independence, Bolívar on June 15, 1813, launched the cry of "war to the death," arousing the population for the struggle against all those originating in the mother country who showed themselves hostile to the emancipation movement or who tried to stand aside from the struggle. He demanded confiscation of their property and its division among the soldiers of the army of independence. An advocate of the centralist principle, Bolívar established a dictatorship for the duration of the war against Spain, repressing counterrevolutionary disturbances without pity. Despite that, Bolívar did not succeed in closely uniting the majority of the population. Defeated, taking refuge first in Jamaica and then in Haiti, he came to the conclusion that it was indispensable to deal openly during the war of independence with various social questions (concerning the slavery of the Negroes and the Indian tribute) and that a rigorous administrative centralization was called for. This found its expression in the well-known Jamaica Letter (September 6, 1815) and also in the agreement with the Haitian president Pétion about the aid that he was to lend the Venezuelan insurgents on condition that the slaves would be freed. On July 6, 1816, Bolívar addressed the population of the province of Caracas with a proclamation in which it was stated: "That unhappy portion of our brothers that has groaned under the miseries of slavery is now free. Nature, justice, and policy ask for the emancipation of the slaves. Henceforward in Venezuela there will be only one class of men: All will be citizens."

The principles of the proclamation were carried out in liberated territory and were confirmed by a number of subsequent orders. In 1819 Bolívar ordered 5,000 Negroes enrolled in the army. In his address to the Congress of Angos-

tura on February 15, 1819, Bolívar insisted on the need to abolish slavery and to provide land to the *llaneros*.

The positive value of those measures, as regards the results of the war, was indicated by contemporaries. Not only had the Negroes taken active part in military actions on the side of the army of independence, but some of them even attained the rank of officers (for example, the hero of the war for independence Lieutenant Pedro Camejo, nicknamed "the first Negro," who fell in the battle of Carabobo). Those men, writes Páez, "have given many pages of heroism and glory to the history of our independence." Another important measure was Bolívar's decree of October 1817 concerning the assignment of lands to the soldiers of independence. In 1816 Páez had already confiscated the properties of the enemies of independence in Apure and had declared their distribution among his soldiers, demanding from Bolívar the confirmation of this act. The latter extended it to the entire army.<sup>3</sup>

These measures exercised a decisive influence upon the course of the war of emancipation in Venezuela and Colombia. The *llaneros* who formed the backbone of the royalist armies of Monteverde and of Boves passed over to the army of independence, becoming its best soldiers.

In September 1823 Bolívar was invited to Peru<sup>4</sup> by the congress of the supporters of independence. The Peruvian nobility, in the person of Riva-Agüero, tried to reach an agreement with the Spanish royalists for a common armed struggle against Bolívar (October–November 1823). Amid such circumstances, Bolívar adopted decisive measures. He was invested with dictatorial powers and undertook the for-

<sup>3</sup> To be sure, the decrees mentioned were not carried out. Páez wrote: "The slave owners opposed me in 1826, 1830, and 1847, when I wanted to free the slaves." As for the assignment of land to the soldiers, Páez, [José Tadeo and/or José Gregorio] Monagas, and other land speculators had bought up from the soldiers at a low price (ten times lower than the real price) the certificates giving them the right to receive a plot of land and moved into the ranks of the landed aristocracy of Venezuela. . . .

<sup>4</sup> Actually, he was not "invited to," but arrived in, Peru in September 1823. [Ed.]

mation of a strong army. And here again he faced the social questions, understanding that only with the help of the people was it possible to win the country's independence. On March 30, 1824, a decree was published on the abolition of the personal tribute that weighed upon the Indians (it is true that in 1827 said tribute was reestablished).<sup>5</sup> By decree of April 8, 1824, the Indians were declared owners of the communal lands, with the right of alienation, so that "no Indian may remain without his respective share of land." The decree of July 4, 1825, made the Indians equal in their rights with the other inhabitants of the country and prohibited the alienation of the lands received by them, on the basis of the decree of April 8, until the year 1850; moreover, the decree regulated the distribution of the communal lands.

In Bolivia, in the department of Santa Cruz, the equalitarian assignment of lands for the peasants was proclaimed. Moreover, the Indians were made officially equal, with respect to civil rights, with the rest of the population, and general forced labor was abolished for the same. Bolívar gave the order for them to be paid their wages not in goods, as was the custom, but in cash. Thanks to Bolívar the first tax on income was introduced, and the first free primary schools were created. During the observance of the constitution established by Bolívar and in the course of the government of his closest comrade-in-arms, Sucre, the tithes and other ecclesiastical revenues were abolished; the military were forbidden to pillage the Indians; taxes were abolished on products of prime necessity, and the quantity of convents reduced. According to some data, at that time the liberation of the slaves was proclaimed in Bolivia,<sup>6</sup> and a loan of one million pesos was contracted for the remuneration of the soldiers who were fighting for independence. In

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<sup>5</sup> In this matter, Bolívar was merely reiterating a measure adopted earlier in Peru by San Martín. [Ed.]

<sup>6</sup> The legal abolition of slavery was written into the first Bolivian constitution, but in a form (contrary to Bolívar's draft) that would delay the practical effect of the measure. See note 2 to Document 5. [Ed.]

this way demoralization and rout spread in the camp of the royalists . . . The cause of the struggle for independence of South America was thus concluded.

Gran Colombia, Peru, and Bolivia were to be the nucleus of an alliance of Spanish American countries. It was hoped to attract Mexico, Central America, Chile, and Río de la Plata to the alliance. Bolívar flatly opposed the participation in it of the United States. "The North Americans and Haitians," he wrote in 1825, "are foreigners to us, if only because they are heterogeneous in character. I shall therefore never agree to our inviting them into our American accord."<sup>7</sup> In its turn, the government of the United States had resolutely opposed the plans to create a federation of Latin American states. Even as progressive a man in the history of the United States as President Jefferson wrote in a letter to J. Monroe of February 14 [*sic*; actually 4], 1816, about his hope that those countries would form various confederations without fusing into a single one, because in the event that they did, they might become a powerful neighbor. All these facts show the baselessness of the attempt of current American historiography to consider Bolívar as a founder of Pan Americanism (an attempt that echoed during the meeting of the presidents of the American states convoked at Panama in July 1956).

Neither are the assertions that Bolívar followed an English orientation tenable. In a letter addressed to B[ernardo] Monteagudo on August 5, 1823, on the subject of a project for incorporation of Colombia into a league headed by England, he wrote: "After England has placed herself at the head of such a league, we shall be her humble servants, for, in making a pact with the strong, the weak assume an eternal obligation." In a letter to Santander on May 20, 1825, Bolívar observed: "The Spaniards are no longer a danger to us, but the English are very much so." Of course,

<sup>7</sup> In this and subsequent quotations from Bolívar's letters, the English version is that appearing in Lecuna and Bierck, *Selected Writings of Bolívar*. The Russian version of the first of these was rather different but did not alter the sense of the original. [Ed.]

that did not prevent Bolívar from taking advantage of Anglo-French, Anglo-North American, or Anglo-Spanish disagreements and obtaining help from England; however, such aid did not have an official character, nor did it play any decisive role in the struggle for independence.

Bolívar and his companions-at-arms defended the general national interests. This determined the progressive character of their activity. Bolívar was not free from some class prejudices; his political viewpoints were not very consistent; ambition, arrogance, and a certain attachment to outward effects characterized his personality. But in general Bolívar clearly understood the demands of the moment in the struggle for the independence of Latin America.

The war exercised an enormous influence on the later development of Hispanic America. It led to the liquidation of the colonial regime and to the establishment of the political independence of all the Hispanic American countries, with the exception of Cuba and Puerto Rico. An end was put to commercial monopolies, prohibitions, limitations, and regulations, which in the end created more favorable conditions for the development of capitalist relationships in Hispanic America and for its incorporation into the system of the world economy. The native population was freed from personal tribute and from forced labor on behalf of private individuals, the state, and the church. In a majority of the countries slavery was abolished and the rights of the church limited. In all the Spanish American governments that had just arisen a republican regime was established. Also of a progressive nature were the suppression of the Inquisition, the abolition of titles of nobility, the stimulation of immigration, etc. Thus, as a result of the war of independence, the aims of the bourgeois revolution were partially carried into practice.

It is true that the war of independence did not provoke radical changes in the economic-social structure of the countries of Hispanic America. Large agrarian property remained fundamentally intact; the *latifundistas* and the Catholic Church preserved their basic positions. The major part of the peasantry continued subject to feudal or semi-feudal exploitation. The Indians, the Negroes, and many

mestizos were actually deprived of their political rights by means of property and educational qualifications and other limitations. Nevertheless, the war of emancipation contributed to the weakening of feudalism, to the development of capitalist relationships and bourgeois society.

Arthur P. Whitaker

## Bolívar and the American System

*The role of Bolívar in international politics has inspired a full quota of patriotic (and Pan Americanist) clichés, as well as some diametrically contradictory interpretations. The latter are readily understandable, since his policies inevitably changed in the face of varying circumstances. He was likewise perfectly capable of professing sincere personal admiration for a people and its institutions (to wit, the United States) while believing that an intimate political and diplomatic association with it would be impractical and/or undesirable. Thus it is not easy to summarize in a few words the part that he played in the development of an American system of nations. One of the most successful brief assessments is that which Professor Arthur P. Whitaker, a long-time student of inter-American relations, has incorporated in his series of essays on the "Western Hemisphere idea," which he defines as the belief "that somehow or other the peoples of the Western Hemisphere were tied together by a special relationship*

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Reprinted from Arthur P. Whitaker, *The Western Hemisphere Idea: Its Rise and Decline* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1954), pp. 24-27, 42-44, 48-49. Used by permission of Cornell University Press.



*which set them apart from the rest of the world"—a belief that Bolívar, as Whitaker points out, never really shared.*

From 1810 on, the internationalist movement was promoted in various ways by statesmen and writers of several Spanish American countries. The promoter most frequently cited is Simón Bolívar of Gran Colombia, or Greater Colombia, which included present-day Colombia, Venezuela, and Ecuador. Indeed, he is often given more of the credit than he deserves. For example, as Argentine historians have pointed out, Mariano Moreno of Buenos Aires anticipated in 1810 the essential points contained in Bolívar's famous Jamaica Letter of 1815, and Bernardo Monteagudo, another product of the Plata region, aided greatly in formulating plans for Bolívar's Panama Congress. Nevertheless, since sustained leadership in the movement during the period under consideration came from Gran Colombia, which was dominated by Bolívar, we may take his thought on the subject as representative.

For our purposes, the important point is that Bolívar's plans for international cooperation did not accord with the Western Hemisphere idea. Before the Monroe Doctrine was proclaimed in 1823, his plan embraced only Spanish America in the New World; on the other hand, it extended beyond the Western Hemisphere to provide for some sort of link between Spanish America and Great Britain. On the basis of his Jamaica Letter, he has frequently been credited with holding hemispheric views, for in it he spoke of the possibility that the Isthmus of Panama might become for "America" what ancient Corinth had been for the Grecian states, serving as the seat of a "congress of representatives of republics, kingdoms, and empires that will discuss peace and war with the nations of the world." But the context makes it clear that by "America" he meant only Spanish America, and what is more, the text itself shows that in 1815 he regarded even this narrower notion as a pipe dream.

When Bolívar wrote the Jamaica Letter, he was a beaten rebel and a refugee, but by 1822 the tide had turned in his favor and the dream of 1815 no longer seemed chimerical. Accordingly, he and his Colombian associates, Vice President Santander and Foreign Minister Gual, negotiated a series of bilateral pacts with other Spanish American states which provided for both an immediate alliance and the eventual holding of an international congress. Still, however, as in 1815, his plan embraced only Spanish America in the New World. Moreover, the widening rift between Britain and her other associates in the Concert of Europe now hardened Bolívar's predilection for Britain into a policy. Henceforth it was an essential part of his planning for a Spanish American league that the latter should enjoy the protection of Britain. Given the realities of the power situation in the Atlantic world, this plan may have been the soundest one conceivable, but it had nothing to do with the Western Hemisphere idea and its political expression, the American system.

What effect the Monroe Doctrine had on Bolívar it is impossible to say with certainty. His voluminous published correspondence contains only one rather noncommittal reference to it. Perhaps it is a mere coincidence that shortly after learning about it, he once more began to give his personal attention to the plan for an international conference, which for three years past he had left to Santander and Gual to develop. These two, at any rate, were strongly influenced by Monroe's message, for it certainly stimulated them (as it perhaps did Bolívar) to renewed activity in favor of the proposed international conference, which it was finally agreed should be held at Panama in 1826. The message also brought their planning for the conference more nearly into line with the hemispheric idea of the American system by leading them, first, to invite the United States to participate in the Panama Congress (contrary to Bolívar's original intention)<sup>1</sup> and, second, to supplement

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<sup>1</sup> Though the author does not develop the point here, it should perhaps be noted that Bolívar's opposition was based both on his appreciation of the cultural differences between Anglo-America and Spanish America and on his conviction that United States

the original agenda with a proposal to provide multilateral, inter-American support for the idea of Hemisphere defense which the Monroe Doctrine had stated in unilateral terms.<sup>2</sup>

Bolívar himself, however, was not converted to the American system. An intimate tie with Britain continued to be his chief prescription for Spanish America. In March 1825, as preparations for the Panama Congress were taking shape, he wrote Santander: "Believe me, my dear General, we shall save the New World if we come to an agreement with England in *political and military matters*. This simple sentence ought to tell you more than two whole volumes."

The question how—that is, in what respect and to what extent—the Congress failed is best approached by first noting how it succeeded. The Congress lasted three weeks in June and July of 1826 and was attended by delegates from Mexico, Central America, Greater Colombia, and Peru, and by an official British observer and an unofficial Dutch observer. The United States was not represented; it appointed two delegates, but their appointment was delayed so long by partisan opposition . . . that neither of them reached Panama. Perhaps the greatest success of the Congress lay in the fact that it took place at all, for it was the first international conference ever held in America. Also, it brought together delegates from several American countries and, once assembled, they achieved enough to render the

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participation would be ill received by Great Britain. Neither did he wish to invite Brazil, which was not only Portuguese in background but monarchical in form of government. But Santander and Gual saw to it that both were invited. [Ed.]

<sup>2</sup> According to one of the two Peruvian-Colombian treaties of 1822, the meeting of a "general assembly of the [Spanish] American states" was needed in order to advise the states "in great conflicts," serve as "point of contact in common dangers" and "faithful interpreter of their public treaties," and finally act as arbiter "in their disputes and differences" (Vicente Lecuna, comp., *La entrevista de Guayaquil* [4th ed., 2 vols., Caracas, 1962-1963], II, 184). Clearly, the idea of multilateral defense among the *Spanish* American nations was present then even if not spelled out. [Ed.]

meeting a notable precedent for future generations. Though only four Spanish American countries were represented, they embraced an area occupied by eleven of the present twenty states of Latin America. This large area extended continuously from California down through Peru, and at that time it contained three-fourths of the population of Spanish America.

The principal achievements of the Congress were two. First, it adopted a number of treaties providing for broad multilateral cooperation, in defense and other matters, which anticipated a large part of what was to be accomplished by subsequent inter-American conferences down to our own day. Second, it provided for the resumption of its labors at another congress to be held at Tacubaya, Mexico, the following year, and thus established at the outset the principle of the continuity of inter-American cooperation.

Though all this adds up to a substantial degree of success, the Panama Congress has gone down in history as a failure. That judgment is correct only if the term "Panama Congress" is used in a broad sense to mean not only the Congress itself but also its sequel. It is in this broad sense that we have spoken of the Panama fiasco, for the failure came after the Congress adjourned. The fiasco was twofold, consisting first in the failure of all the governments concerned, except the Colombian, to ratify the Panama agreements, with the result that these remained a dead letter; and second, in the failure of the follow-up congress to meet at Tacubaya, Mexico, the next year, as stipulated at Panama. The disillusionment of this double failure increased the already widespread opposition to the hemispheric movement, which was brought to a full stop by two simultaneous developments: the subsidence of the threat from the Holy Alliance and the outbreak in Spanish America of what Pedro Henríquez-Ureña calls "the latent anarchy of the colonial regime," in the form of an alternation of civil war and despotism that was to scourge most of Spanish America for a generation or more to come.

Colombia's leadership in the inter-American movement came to an end with the Panama fiasco, partly because

Bolívar was so disillusioned by it that he lost interest in the effort to form a general American confederation or league. For a time he shifted his attention to the smaller but still ambitious plan for a Federation of the Andes, a kind of superstate which he hoped would extend from Mexico to Chile.<sup>3</sup> Then, disappointed again, he swung to the opposite extreme of isolationist Colombian nationalism. The little-noticed document in which this about face is recorded forms a rather startling epilogue to the story that began with the internationalist Jamaica Letter of 1815. The document in question is a note of August 14, 1828, written by order of Bolívar, instructing Colombian minister Pedro Gual to break off his mission to Mexico. The note reads:

The decision of His Excellency [Bolívar] has been very carefully considered and is irrevocable. He agrees with you that, for the present, Colombia ought to devote itself entirely to its own affairs, think of its own interests, endeavor to establish itself firmly both at home and in its relations with the European powers from which it can hope for the best advantages, and abandon intervention in the common affairs of the American states.

In 1829 Bolívar carried his new policy to the extreme of seeking a separate peace for Colombia with Spain.

Posterity has almost invariably ignored Bolívar's rather dreary ending in isolationism and has pictured him only as the author of the Jamaica Letter and the Panama Congress. Oddly enough, his own contemporaries seem to have done

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<sup>3</sup> Actually, the proposed Federation of the Andes was to include only Bolivia, Peru, and Colombia—thus extending from the southern border of Central America, not Mexico. Bolívar never developed his thoughts concerning it in detail, but he apparently hoped that both the federation itself and each of the constituent states (possibly six with Colombia first broken down into its three main sections and Peru divided into two) would have constitutions in some way modeled on the one he had drafted for Bolivia. His thoughts had begun to turn in this direction, and away from a broader league, even before the "Panama fiasco." [Ed.]

likewise. Whatever the explanation of the latter fact may be, it is an important one for our story, for in the next decade after Bolívar's death the government of Colombia was in the hands of men who had opposed him in his lifetime and who now continued to oppose all his works, one of the most characteristic of which, they thought, was the inter-American movement. Hence it was partly by default that in the next generation the leadership of this movement passed from Bolívar's own country to Mexico and Peru.

Víctor Andrés Belaunde

## A Standard Appraisal

*All things considered, the best interpretation of Bolívar's political role is still that of the late Peruvian statesman and scholar Víctor Andrés Belaunde. This work, published in 1938, was largely based on lectures he had delivered even earlier. The Bolívar it portrays was the heir of both Rousseau and the Conquistadores, was neither demigod nor self-seeking tyrant, and was capable of both growth and decline. In the following passages, Belaunde presents a brief sketch of the Liberator's intellectual and psychological formation and an overall analysis of the place Bolívar came to occupy in "the political thought of the Spanish American revolution."*

At the close of the eighteenth century, the first manifestations of a political philosophy appeared in Spanish America. Two well-defined trends were evident, one progressive or reforming and the other revolutionary. The reforming trend presupposed the continuance of Hispanic unity by a monarchy or a federation of monarchies and was closely

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linked with the intellectual movement of the time of Carlos III, as personified in Aranda, Campomanes, and, above all, Jovellanos. Their disciples were such American reformists as Baquíjano, Villava, San Miguel, Abad y Queipo, Salas, Arango, Belgrano, and Vidaurre. Revolutionary ideas, on the other hand, found their inspiration primarily in the independence of the United States and, later, in the French Revolution; this school of thought was, therefore, more directly connected with the political principles of the latter countries. Viscardo y Guzmán, Espejo, Nariño, and, especially, Miranda represented the radical or revolutionary movement, or the desire for absolute independence. Their program was to break with Spain; its logical conclusion, to establish the republican form of government in separate nations. . . . Miranda, however, proposed a monarchy including all Spanish America. As for Bolívar, conditions in Venezuela, on the one hand, and circumstances of his life and education, on the other, placed him from an early age in direct contact with revolutionary or radical influences.

In a letter addressed to Santander in May 1825, Bolívar refutes the statements of Mollien<sup>1</sup> in regard to his education. After allusions to Rodríguez, Bello, and Padre Andújar, his first teachers, and to his studies in the Academia de San Fernando in Madrid, he says: "Certainly I am learned neither in the philosophy of Aristotle nor in the criminal code, but it may well be that M. Mollien has not studied so closely as I Locke, Condillac, Buffon, D'Alembert, Helvetius, Montesquieu, Mably, Filangieri, Lalande, Rousseau, Voltaire, Rollin, Berthot." . . . These words show that, in contradistinction to those who incorporated new ideas into traditional philosophy or harmonized the two, Bolívar, from early youth, was dominated by eighteenth-century thought, assimilated from original sources and uncolored by the adaptations of Spanish reformists. Education and environment and, let us add, temperament were all contributing factors in Bolívar's radical and revo-

<sup>1</sup> Gaspar Théodore Mollien, author of *Voyage dans la république de Colombia, en 1823* (2 vols., Paris, 1824), which was one of the most widely read early accounts of travels in independent Latin America. [Ed.]



lutionary attitude. His deep affection for his native land, with the tremendous influence of Humboldt and the feats and warlike program of Miranda, completed the work. All this explains the unique position of Bolívar from the time of the first insurrections, as compared with that of other American leaders who long had felt the weight of reforming or evolutionary theories. Little by little, at a rate which varied in the different countries, the reformists became radicals or revolutionists; in Bolívar the revolutionist was apparent from the first.

Within the bounds of a general orientation, the thought of Bolívar displays moments of hesitation and even contradiction, due to the fundamental feature of his mental make-up, a duality caused by two elements which compose his character. He is a dreamer and a realist, a poet and a man of action. Bolívar being thus constituted, his thought will not have absolute logic or harmony; but it will not be less great on this account. On the contrary, this conflict in his make-up will emphasize the human element and lend us the key to the tragedy of his life. This duality and this conflict in Bolívar's ideology make it more representative of the land and of American history.

This feature is the fundamental characteristic of his mentality. Unamuno observes that Bolívar's cult of glory makes him similar to Don Quixote. His heroic energy and his indomitable will, his qualities as a doer, are explained by his Spanish ancestry. He is one of the *conquistadores* of the sixteenth century reincarnate and imbued with the new humanistic ideal. His education added elements of intellectualism and rationalism, and there was still the exaltation and lyricism of Rousseau in his make-up. Bolívar is, because of this, the first of our romantic writers. Humboldt brought to him the feeling of admiration for the magnificent natural environment of America, while Napoleon gave him the fascinating example of the military hero and political creator.

Rousseauism was added to Quixotism, accentuating his tendency to identify his person with his mission. Besides these dreams, besides the romantic rapture which was reflected in his exploits and in his style, there is, in wondrous

contrast, a profoundly realistic vision of circumstances, of facts, and of men. His inspired perception penetrated into the most hidden things, he saw the most obscure detail of the confused situation.

No one else in all America saw so clearly; no other could paint its life so vigorously or in such bold relief. This clear vision inspired all his political ideas and explains his originality and the manner in which his plans conformed with the needs of the moment and with the historic method. Again we point out that this realism was his birthright as a Spaniard; it is the essential attribute of the race; it is the realism of Cervantes, the realism of the picaresque novel, of the pictures of Velásquez, of the tapestries of Goya; it is above all, the realism of the great men of action which Spain has produced: like Cortez in military emprise, like the mystics Ignatius Loyola or Teresa of Ávila.

In describing the spiritual development of Bolívar in an essay published, in 1930, in the *Bulletin of the Pan American Union* commemorating the centenary of the Liberator's death, I said:

. . . unquestionably, one must clearly differentiate the following stages of Bolívar's political philosophy: first, that of the radical or demagogic propagandist whose program was the destruction of the old regime and a definite break with Spain; second, that of the revolutionary leader who advocated a strong and stable unitarian government to win the military conflict; third, that of the statesman who applied the same principles of unity, stability, and efficiency to the definitive political organization of a conservative republic, administered by an intellectual and moral elite; fourth, that of the victor in the struggle for independence, desirous of forming a vaster national entity from the different nations he had liberated, a government based on a semifederal and semidemocratic imperialism, showing unquestionable Napoleonic influence; fifth, that of the statesman who, facing the complexities of the political problem and

of the continued existence of Greater Colombia, hesitated between a conservative centralized republic under a vigorous executive and the formation of separate governments in the respective historic national nuclei, which together would form a simple federation; sixth, that of the dictator who attempted to preserve national unity and who, convinced of the transitoriness of this form of government, placed upon the will of the people the responsibility for deciding its destinies.

Enlightened and impartial analysis will reveal the fact that five of these six stages have several characteristics in common, with differences of emphasis and circumstance: nationalism, republicanism, respect for the will of the people, unitarianism, a professional and independent congress, administrative discipline, efficiency and order, independence of the judicial power, importance of cultural, ethical, and religious factors, stability of institutions, and continental solidarity. Such is the essence of Bolívar's thought.

The characteristics of Bolívar as thinker and doer in the political realm stand out with greater clarity in the first three stages which constitute the ascending steps in his career. From the year 1810 until the year 1825, Bolívar's line of thought, paralleling his conduct as a soldier and military leader, never wavers. But from the fourth stage on, that is, after the independence of America has been achieved, variations begin to appear; nationalism and amphictyonic organization are replaced by a supernationalistic or imperialistic plan: the Federation of the Andes;<sup>2</sup> centralized and

<sup>2</sup> On the Federation of the Andes, see note 3 to Document 22. This scheme had already been abandoned by the time Bolívar was toying (in Belaunde's "fifth stage") with the idea of a "simple federation" of Venezuela, New Granada, and Quito as a possible means of preserving the unity of Gran Colombia. The latter was really the solution that offered the best chance of success in the long run, though still not a very good chance; but Bolívar never firmly adopted it, becoming convinced instead that there was no middle course between a unitary regime and outright dissolution of the union. [Ed.]

technical democracy gives way to the semifederalism of the electoral colleges;<sup>3</sup> and the [hereditary] professional Senate, which was the soul of the Republic, gives way to the life-term presidency, now considered the center of the political structure.

Many have sought to find in this supernationalistic *democratic Caesarism* the true law of Bolivarian thought. Partisans of personal government in America have claimed to find support and precedent in Bolívar. It is only fair to say that there exist abysmal differences between the various forms of personal government. If at certain times Bolívar believed that dictatorship or a regime of personal influence was necessary, he never believed that such a regime, in any case transitory, should be lacking in ethical standards or technical form.

In America there have been many personal governments, some having a certain nationalistic flavor, others aimed at economic prosperity, still others simply arbitrary and brutally despotic. None of these types of government can claim parentage in Bolívar's concept.

The true disciples and followers of Bolívar in America are those who like him have sought to perform that always most difficult, often impossible, task of adapting the essence of republican institutions to the needs of stable, strong, and efficient government; the statesmen who drafted the Chilean Constitution of 1833 and assured its successful functioning; Alberdi, who inspired the Argentine Constitution of 1853 and those who consolidated that charter; Bartolomé Herrera in Peru and those who supported the Constitution of 1860; and finally Rafael Núñez and Miguel Antonio Caro in Colombia, who restored Colombian unity.

Historical truth does not diminish [Bolívar's] stature; the vacillations, the emendations, the variations, not only in direction but in his spiritual stage when facing the tremendous reality of America, indicate his essential humanness, and this is the very foundation of his incomparable great-

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<sup>3</sup> Of the Bolivian constitution. [Ed.]

ness. A Bolívar who was infallible, faultless, an inflexible Bolívar, unresponsive to the influences of his environment, to the ideas of his friends; a Bolívar who was not influenced on the one hand by the ideal of building up great units, and on the other by the realistic teachings of small nationalisms; a Bolívar who was not swayed between the dictates of revolutionary ethics, which called for institutions, and the demands of governmental necessity, which called for personal action, would be an unreal, dehumanized Bolívar.

The contrasts which appear in Bolívar's thought merely reflect the contrasts which actually existed in the American scene. The spiritual and political panorama of Hispanic America presents these conflicts: the conflict of our tradition of absolutism with the democratic ideal of the revolution; the conflict of continental solidarity based on language and culture with nationalism deeply rooted in geographic, subethnic, and psychic phenomena; the conflict between democratic changes which were in the atmosphere at that period and the need for a stable and strong government; the conflict between the need for an independent middle class of small landowners and the fact of the latifundium and the intellectual and bureaucratic proletariat; the conflict between political equality and the racial and social differences within each nation; the international conflict of our cultural ties with the Latin nations in full reaction in favor of monarchy, and of our economic and political ties with nations of such different religion and culture.

No solution to these conflicts could be found in the revolution or in the immediate postrevolutionary period. To find the solution was not Bolívar's mission. His merit, great and unique in the history of political thought, is that he described and reflected these conflicts with the pen of a master. Bolívar's life and thought are the land and the soul of America incarnate.

There is another quality of effective greatness in Bolívar which explains his internal struggles, his vacillations and changes. Bolívar is not only a *vital hero* like Napoleon or a political animal like Mirabeau, in the sense in which Ortega

y Gasset describes him. The vital hero never vacillates, he proceeds straight to his objective without doubts and without deviating. Imperturbable, he follows where his dreams and his instincts lead. But Bolívar united to the great qualities of vital hero, which were necessary to his military success, the illumination of an ethical conscience. That ethical element, not always to be conciliated with the unhappy state of affairs in America and the practice of government, is what in Bolívar leads to doubts, emendations, and variations. If sometimes he yields to vital aspirations or illusions, he always returns to his standards; and this is not an indication of weakness but of true greatness. Napoleon felt no regrets nor did he feel that things might have been other than what they were until at St. Helena he was visited by the Spirit; in Bolívar the Spirit was always present, and there is in him, as in no other hero, the eternal struggle between Spirit and Life.

Bolívar himself has described this spiritual state with these words: "To save the country I have had to be a Brutus, and to repress civil war I should have to be a Sulla. Such a character does not become me; I would sooner lose all, even life itself."

To appreciate the unique value of Bolívar's thought in American history we need only turn our attention to the formula of Angostura. Bolívar takes from democracy the concept of national sovereignty and individual rights; but he desires to liberate the political structure from the domination of the will of individuals and the empirical and immediate (presentist) exigencies of universal suffrage. He sees that *democratism* (as Maritain has said) makes all work of continuity impossible. In thinking of this continuity and of the intellectual and moral elements of government, Bolívar had an intuition of the real evil in pure democracy, that is, the placing of society, which is not only an organism but a psychic entity, in the present time, which is mechanical time, and not in human time, which is the integration of the past with the present and the future; an integration produced by the synthesis of historical experience with the needs of the moment and the influence of the ideal. In this sense Bolívar resembled the great French

master Hauriou who confers only powers of control on the majority (*Pouvoir majoritaire*) and leaves the business of government to a minority (*Pouvoir minoritaire*) constituted by authority based on natural qualities of competence, honor, and will to command.

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